Film Quarterly

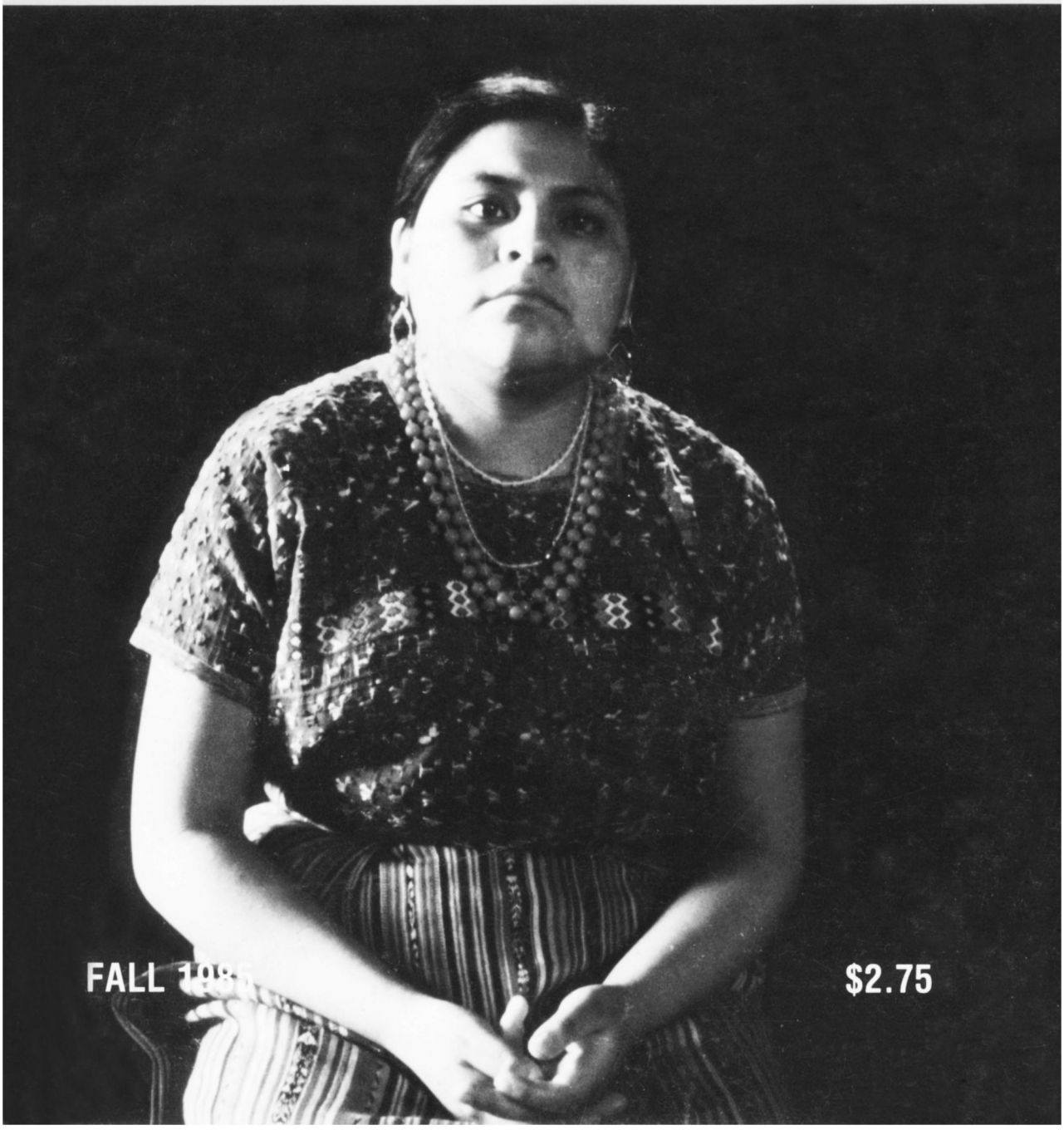
FILMING CENTRAL AMERICAN WARS

READING *CITIZEN KANE*

L'ATALANTE *ERASERHEAD*

A LOVE IN GERMANY

STANDARD GAUGE *SO IS THIS*



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The Making of Citizen Kane
ROBERT L. CARRINGER

Citizen Kane, often considered the greatest film ever made, has long fascinated critics and historians. Credit for its genius has usually been attributed to its director, Orson Welles, though competing claims have been lodged for Herman Mankiewicz, who shared screenwriting credit with Welles. *The Making of Citizen Kane,* based on extensive research in previously inaccessible studio records, is the first attempt to document the shared creative achievement of Welles and his principal collaborators.

Robert L. Carringer has carried out numerous interviews with original participants in the making of *Kane,* and has had extensive talks with Welles himself. He constructs a detailed chronological history of the film's production, identifying the key functions performed by the scriptwriter, art director, cinematographer, editor, sound engineer, special effects technicians, and music director, as well as Welles himself. The quality of their collaboration, Carringer argues, was the crucial element in the film's triumphantly successful realization.

Together with its unprecedented inside information on *Kane,* the volume offers a new understanding about how films were made in the studio system. It is lavishly illustrated with original production documents, art department sketches, and research and production photographs, most of them published here for the first time.

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ALAN ROSENTHAL

When the Mountains Tremble

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAMELA YATES

How to present history on film is one of the key problems obsessing documentary film-makers. In essence the problem has two different aspects—how to assess and evaluate the past, and how to help understand the present and possibly change the future.

The assessment of the fading past can be seen in all the histories and revisionist histories of the Second World War, from "Victory at Sea" and "The Churchill Years" to "The World at War." It is arguable that the further history recedes the easier it is to deal with. Thus WGBH's Vietnam series of the early eighties was, in a sense, more difficult to handle than documentaries on the 1939–45 European conflict because of the continuing immediacy of the pain, the wounds, the conflicts and the controversies.

During the late sixties and early seventies, the confrontation with history, for most American film-makers, came through their feelings about the Vietnam war. Today this has largely been replaced by a confrontation with the issues of the wars in Central America, giving urgency to the second part of the documentarist's problem—how to understand the present and do something about the future.

The film-makers covering the wars, repressions and revolutions of Central America range from commercial network and PBS crews, to independent North American and European sympathizers with the revolutions and to Central American film-makers themselves. They speak to different audiences; they use different methods; and they represent a variety of political views. Many of the complexities and problems of their films have been perceptively dealt with by Julia Lesage in her article *For Our Urgent Use: Films on Central America.**

Pam Yates's experiences are emblematic of those gone through by film-makers working in areas where guerrilla struggles are in progress, and she brings to the situation an unusually rich background. In the discussion below, we focused on her most recent film, *When the Mountains Tremble*, which is about recent Guatemalan history. The spine of the film is provided by the experiences of Rigoberta Menchu, a Christian Indian. Through the threads of Rigoberta's story we feel the richness of the culture, the courage of her people and the tragedy of greed, corruption and repression in Guatemala. Most of the film is shot *vérité* style by Yates and Thomas Sigel, the film's codirector. Part of the filming is done from the government side, but the major experience of the story is seeing the conflict through the eyes and experiences of the Indian peasants and guerrilla fighters.

There are a few stylistic breaks in the film. First there are two dramatic reenactments near the beginning of the film, involving an American Ambassador and Guatemalan officials, and one scene with a CIA officer. Both episodes are based on American documents and establish the importance of US commercial interests in Guatemala. Both scenes have also been fairly heavily criticized by purist critics.

The second stylistic break relates to the filming of Rigoberta Menchu herself. She is filmed in limbo in a studio and describes both the decimation of democratic hopes in Guatemala and the murder of her family by the security police. As the film expands to cover the activities of the government and the guerrillas, so Roberta's story becomes the story of her people.

•

It seems that people define themselves by their choices. Why did you choose Latin America as a subject for film-making?

Well, I was working as a freelance photojournalist in the early seventies for a newspaper in Massachusetts, when the Puerto Rican migration moved up from New York through that area of New England. No one on our

*Julia Lesage, "For Our Urgent Use: Films on Central America," *Jump Cut*, no. 27, 1982.

newspaper spoke Spanish, so I decided to take a short leave of absence and go to Mexico to learn Spanish. While I was there, I began to shoot photos for a Mexican newspaper, and two months turned into two years.

That was 13 years ago. Since that time, I've spent about half my life in Latin America.

When I began to work in the film industry as a sound engineer, I got most of my early jobs because I was bilingual in Spanish and English. That meant I was able to spend a lot of time in Latin America. Then, when the war started against Somoza in Nicaragua in 1978, I began to spend even more and more time. And that's how I really became known for the work that I did in Central America.

Did you come to this work with any strong political preconceptions? Had there been a strong political element in your background?

Not beyond what most Americans of my generation experienced, which was coming of age in the United States during the Vietnam War, which as high school students taught us to question the very principles that our government said it stood for: peace and democracy. We were organized to stop the war, knowing that most Americans were opposed to involvement in Vietnam.

Can you tell me about the origins of When the Mountains Tremble?

My partners in Skylight Pictures, Tom Sigel, and Peter Kinoy, and I wanted to make a film about Guatemala. It was a challenge to us. We're a cinematographer (Sigal), sound recordist (myself) and editor (Kinoy). We all worked freelance and then came together with our skills and equipment to form Skylight Pictures.

We wanted to make a film about Guatemala, because none had been made, and we knew that one of the reasons none had been made was because over 25 Guatemalan journalists had been killed in the three previous years, and international journalists were being prevented from going into Guatemala. Having already filmed in Central America for 3 years we wanted to bring all our knowledge, skills and emotions to the least known country, Guatemala. And we felt, through everything we knew about Guatemala, that there was an incredible story to be told there.

We tried but could never raise the necessary money so we decided to go to the networks with this idea. We went to the three commercial networks, and to PBS, with the idea. Two of the networks, ABC and CBS, wanted to do the film with us. We decided to go with CBS because they had a better reputation for doing straightforward documentaries, especially in the "CBS Reports" units. And that's how it started.

Pamela Yates on location in Guatemala

After some discussion CBS then said, "But *you* can't produce this film. We're going to send a CBS producer with you." So we said, fine, and became the associate producers. Even though we had worked in the area far longer, and spoke Spanish. The producer that we actually ended working with, Martin Smith, was very good. We were able to teach him a lot about Central America, and he was able to teach us a lot about producing for television and how to reach an American audience.

One interesting thing is that prior to all this we had done another film, *El Salvador, Another Vietnam* (which was seen widely in the US and Europe and was nominated for an

Oscar). This slightly frightened CBS. They were afraid to send us with Marty because we were going to be both crew and associate producers, which is a little bit unusual. CBS was afraid that the Guatemalan government would know we had done the El Salvador film, and would stop us at the airport and prevent the whole crew from going in. So CBS said to us, "Okay, you can do the guerrillas and the left, and we'll do the government and everybody else who's above ground. And we'll have two crews and that's how we'll solve it." We said, "No. We're either going to do everything or we're not going to do anything," and CBS had to agree. So we ended up going into the country a few months before the elections in 1982. That's how we were able to get in. They knew they had to open it up to international journalists.

In the end we shot two films for CBS. One called *Central America in Revolt*, in which we did the Guatemala section. And later another hour for "CBS Reports," called simply *Guatemala*.

During the most dangerous and secret parts of the filming, no CBS producers or correspondents were present. These were the most exciting, newsworthy scenes which then belonged to us as independent film-makers.

On our return to Net York, we viewed the material and decided we owned a lot of unused film, and we thought, well, we're going to go back to Guatemala now that we have the experience under our belt, and we're going to do the film that we originally wanted to do. Because the Guatemalan story, with its Indian roots and historical importance, can never really be told in a network format. It needed a partisan approach with a healthy dose of dream realism à la Garcia Marquez.

Where did you think your film would differ from a network report?

I think many television reports are moving slide shows. There's wall-to-wall narration over everything that tells you what you're seeing, how to see it, and who the people are. There's not very much lyricism. The producers are prevented from doing certain things by journalistic constraints, like adding additional music that doesn't emanate from the scene. And they're also obliged to tell a balanced story. To our way of film-making, a balanced story can be a confusing story. All controversy, provocative ideas, are diluted. Experts speak but not those who are most affected: the powerless.

This notion of objectivity also means that you distance yourself and the audience from the people that you're filming. We wanted to make a film which would actually draw Americans closer to Guatemala, not distance them in a dry, educational (i.e., boring) way.

Also in most network pieces there's a correspondent who becomes the centerpiece of the film. We wanted to avoid that by featuring a Guatemalan in a dramatic role, which is essentially how Rigoberta Menchu is used in *When the Mountains Tremble*.

How did you eventually raise the rest of the money?

From individuals, church groups, foundations, and finally we were able to get finishing funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

We presented them with a proposal, and we also cut together a ten-minute pilot, which was a short film in and of itself. It's always been our strength at Skylight, with an editor like Peter Kinoy, to make good pilots, ones that are dramatic and fun to look at, and which have a high success rate in raising money.

How did you find Rigoberta? When did you decide to build the film around her?

We met her when she came to speak at the United Nations before the General Assembly. We knew that our main problem in the editing of *Mountains* was that we had very few central characters, and we had no one central character to act as the thread to weave the film together. And then, about three days after I met her, I knew that she would be the best choice. Then it was Tom's idea that we film her in isolation the way we did, to give her that storytelling quality, to separate her from the bulk of the documentary film-making, and to represent her as the voice of the Guatemalan people.

We also filmed her this way because we're moving towards a combination of drama and documentary forms, and Rigoberta's role was another way of experimenting with that.

Did you shoot her before you started the editing? Afterwards?

At the very beginning, before we really had an assemblage. She came and looked at all the footage with us, and we discussed the kinds of scenes that we were going to put together. Of course we knew her whole story. We had tried

to gather every article that had been written about her, and also had many long conversations with her. Then she sat down and wrote the script, her own personal story, over a period of three days. Afterwards we went into a studio and filmed her.

Can you tell me about the organization and logistics of the film-making?

We wanted to talk to all of the motive forces involved in the Guatemalan conflict. We knew from our previous experience that an American audience would not accept a film unless that had been done.

So we actually filmed almost all the government side first, and got the film out of the country, and then we went on several trips with the guerrillas into the Indian highlands.

Did the government know you were going to film the guerrillas?

No. If they had known, we would have been declared enemies of the state and either killed or expelled.

But how did you accomplish that?

We made contact with the guerrillas before we went into the country, and we were given a time and a place, and instructions how to meet a contact of theirs. When we met the contact, we started a whole series of meetings about what we wanted to film, how we were going to achieve it, and where they were going to take us.

This working on both side of the line made for interesting contrasts. The general oppression is so intense in Guatemala that you just can't ask someone their candid opinion because they won't tell you. At least not above ground in the capital.

But when we went with the guerrillas, it was like crossing an invisible line. All of a sudden, everyone would tell you anything you wanted to know. They were very free about how they spoke, whether it was for or against the guerrillas. And to me that was a revelation. A once-in-a-lifetime journalistic experience.

Didn't the government query what you were doing? They knew you were in the country, that you hadn't left, and you suddenly disappear, then what? Where were you?

Well, the Guatemalan government had other concerns besides journalists at the time. For instance they were very interested in getting as much exposure in the United States as possible, because it was before Reagan had decided that

Young women from Nebaj, Guatemala: WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE

he was going to reopen military sales to them. The Guatemalan government didn't see us as posing any threat, and when we went on the secret trips, we tried to leave when there were a lot of journalists in the country, so that our absence wouldn't be noticed.

What were the main difficulties of filming, technical or otherwise?

The main difficulties were keeping a high level of credibility with the Guatemalan government; going for very long periods of time without being near electricity; keeping our equipment clean; keeping safe; keeping calm; all the time being aware of everything that was going on around us.

History moves very fast in Central America. When we went into the Indian highlands, we decided to take more equipment rather than less. Because we wanted to film all sides with an equal level of technology. For example we took a tripod. Now a tripod is a real luxury to carry over hundreds of miles. Tom wanted to take it because it meant he could do certain kinds of shots that we had done in the city. I took radio microphones, which are very fragile. We outfitted backpacks with foam in order to carry all this equipment. And we took one change of clothes.

How did you gain the trust and confidence of the guerrillas?

A few things helped us. One was that their leadership had seen *El Salvador, Another Vietnam*. That film was used as a fundamental tool in catalyzing a movement to stop US intervention in Central America. So that was our introduction.

The second thing was that they, just like the Guatemalan government, wanted to speak to Americans and put their case before them. We were introduced to the opposition by people who were trusted by the guerrillas so they in

turn trusted us. We spoke Spanish and we had access to the networks (big audience) as well as independent exhibition (important, active audiences).

What I like very much in the film is its style. It isn't just polemic or propaganda. You feel people as human beings, as having lives, dimensions. And a large part of that comes through really looking at them. You're really looking, you have time to pause and you're seeing and you're feeling. Was that very deliberate as a camera style?

Yes. It was. The way that we make films is by knowing and reading all the available material and by talking to as many people as possible before we embark on the production. So that in many senses every frame of the film should reflect what you've been able to gather about a situation. About a country. You know the frame where the general is sitting in front of the camera with sunglasses on and a bodyguard behind him? You see the general's head, and just the bodyguard's waist and his pistol behind him. Those kinds of frames come from a certain knowledge about visual relationships that point to a political relationship.

Making a film as a narrative means that you have to look at people. And in Guatemala you're drawn to look at people anyway because they are so beautiful and the clothes that they wear are so unusual. Even though they're very poor, the Indians have a really remarkable sense of beauty integral to their culture.

In a number of your films you've shot battle skirmishes and fighting. There must have been times when you were in danger? What was happening inside yourself?

Let's see, was I afraid? I'm always afraid in battles. The first and second confrontations are usually the worst. After that, you get more used to it. It's like acquiring street smarts. You know, people in Iowa would think growing up in New York terrible. "On the streets of New York aren't you afraid? Aren't there criminals around every corner?" You learn how to conduct yourself in battle, in crossfire, what you can do, what you can't do, what weapons are being used, what's their effect, where's the fire coming from. You can't control a combat situation, but at least knowing the ropes helps to assuage the fear.

What is the hardest thing, say, emotionally, for you during the filming?

Overcoming the fear inherent in making good films in Central America. Not the fear of battle, so much as the fear of what could happen. The fear that seized you when you go on a night trip with the guerrillas. The fear of being picked up by the paramilitary death squads or feeling that someone is watching you all the time. Just not knowing from minute to minute what is going to happen to you, and when the government is going to find out what we are really doing.

In the film your sympathies come out very much on the side of the guerrillas. Did you consider portraying the other side in a more logical, more emotional, more sympathetic way? Were there voices which you dropped? And was there any slanting, conscious or unconscious, of the people you interviewed?

We tried to interview everyone, from moderate politicians to church to armed forces, to government to guerrillas. But in Guatemala, the government has been characterized by Amnesty International as one of the worst abusers of human rights in the hemisphere. And they are. It's hard to characterize the head of the Armed Forces, after you've seen massacre after massacre, in any other light than the one that we did in the film. I mean, if you were in Germany from 1935 to 1940, how could you present a balanced picture of what Hitler was doing? There's no way morally that you could have, especially if one knew then what we know now, or if one had enough foresight to see it coming. That's what we hope to achieve with *Mountains* vis à vis Guatemala specifically and Central America generally. We are trying to show what history was, is and may be. May be in the sense that each person can influence history.

The film has a very logical drive and thrust to it, the story holds together very well and its unfolding seems inevitable, as if it could have been done no other way. Were there major scenes that you had to drop, that you regret, that were left out?

There were many, particularly some of the scenes people risked their lives to help us get. We weren't able to include them in the final film because a lot of them are testimonies of torture and murder by the Guatemalan armed forces, and we just felt the audience could only take so much of that. Luckily, because we did these two television programs, as well as a video

short for use in US Congressional efforts, we were able to make use of them. We tried to have a linear, narrative structure to the film, so that Americans would understand why somebody like Rigoberta actually was in favor of armed struggle. Our idea in the film was to build it logically through the different progressions of frustrated struggles for democracy, to the inevitable conclusion of the armed struggle.

Were you conscious of the very gentle, very human way the women guerrilla recruits are shown in the film? Was there a conscious attempt to get shots that would show them in that way? The women are soldiers but still seem very tender and feminine.

Yes, I like those scenes with the young women recruits. If you see the rushes themselves, you see the girls are giggling to death. And they're flirting with the person who is our translator. It's a phenomenon that I've seen many times in Central American among teenage combatants—they combine tender and childlike qualities with a very serious and sophisticated understanding of what they're doing, why they're fighting. They are wise in a way beyond their years.

Many of the people in the film tend to become symbols, to become voices larger than themselves. And there is a danger of being simplistic. Do you think film critics or American analysts of Guatemala will have difficulties with any of this or with the politics of your film? With any of the political descriptions of the film? Or would they basically agree with them?

They would think the film reflected Guatemalan reality. But I think, like you, they would say it's a little too simplistic. It's too black-and-white and no grey areas. To our way of thinking, in making films, the most important thing is to tell a good story—to reach an audience through the telling of our story. And that means, even in the documentary, taking certain dramatic liberties. Since there were no films about Guatemala, we decided to tell the story through Rigoberta with a definite point of view. Hopefully other films will come along about Guatemala and will explore certain sections of what we tried to cover (for example the church) and show more of its complexity. But we chose to make a general film about Guatemala because one didn't exist. At the same time, one has to be very careful not to put everything in one film. You also want to tell a very good story, not spew facts and figures. And I think that that may be an area that the political analysts would have trouble with. But most film-makers and viewers won't.

When we were talking earlier you said that occasionally you have had difficulties with left-wing criticism of the film. I'm curious as to why.

Well, like most critics, they don't feel they've justified their role in society until they've criticized something. We made the film for an American audience, most of whom know little about Central America, most of whom have never been to Central America, or who have been there only as tourists. So they knew little and are confused about the role of the United States in Central America and the war there. The sign of a good political film-maker is if he or she thoroughly understands the subject, thoroughly understands the audience and then moves the audience a little closer to the subject. Then one has accomplished something!

But the leftwing critics want a more complex analysis and because we didn't always cover the political situation in depth, political analysts and film critics of the left have criticized our film. They've said that we have an unblinking admiration for the guerrillas. They've been very narrow-minded in terms of the form of the documentary film, arguing that the dramatic sections ruin the film. And even though the film has had a great response theatrically, there still hasn't been that much publicity or interviews with magazines such as *Cineast* or *Jump Cut*.

About six months have passed since you finished the film. Looking at it today, do you see any things you would have done differently?

I think I would consider doing the dramatic section a little differently, but I'm really glad we did it. At the moment it doesn't work in and of itself because there are so many different elements competing in the first reel.

I'll tell you one thing we did change. When people first saw the film they were really confused, because of the dramatic section, about who was real and who was an actor. So we had to put a title card at the beginning of the film explaining that all of the people and events in the film are real except for two reenacted scenes which are based on recently declassified US government documents.

There is one other point we've had second

NICARAGUA: REPORT FROM THE FRONT

thoughts about and that's the tone of the voices we use in some of the voice-overs. We were really undecided whether to do voice-over in English or subtitle the film. We wanted to subtitle it because it's a more purist approach. But we also knew that Americans hate subtitles, and since film is a visual medium, we didn't want people to read the film. We wanted them to watch the film.

So we made a stylistic decision that all of the action sequences would be subtitled. And all of the sequences which were people speaking directly to the camera would have voice-over in English.

There's nothing else really that I would do over again. You know, we spent a year and a half crafting the film, and everything in the film is very, very well thought out. That's one of the pleasures of working as an independent filmmaker. You're not working for an executive producer and consequently you have a certain kind of freedom. No one's telling you what to do and what not to do. And I think that's why we decided to make these kinds of films. We worked so much producing and shooting for television requirements that in our independent work we want to do films that have much more passion.

One hopes that these kinds of films will bring about change. Though what documentary does is absolutely undocumented. What would you *like this film to do?*

Well, I'd like the film to help organize Americans to stop US intervention in Central America. And also, in doing that, to aid in the organizational efforts for social change in the United States. Those two fundamental reasons were why we made the film. I think one of the reasons the films* have been so successful theatrically is because when they were released one of the strongest political movements in the United States was for peace and against intervention in Central America. That movement was where we drew our inspiration for the making of the films. And now that we've made the films we're giving them back to that movement.

In other words, in every city we open in, part of the formula for success is making sure that there is a grassroots campaign and that the groups have access to the theater to talk to people about the local work, to sell their literature, to get more people active. So it's been kind of a give-and-take thing. The film wasn't developed in isolation. And we hope that it will add to the movement for peace. We hope that when people come out after the film is over, that they will have had an emotionally compelling experience that makes them think or feel that the people of Central America and the people of the United States have more in common with each other than we each have with our respective governments (with the exception of Nicaragua).

Have you made any attempts to show the films to governmental circles?

Sure . . . especially *Nicaragua: Report from the Front*. We've shown that a lot to Congress people. As a matter of fact, there are several parts of that film that have been officially entered into the Congressional Record, by those Congress people who are against giving aid to the Contras.

How was Nicaragua: Report from the Front *put together?*

Originally we went to film the US military maneuvers in Honduras for Haskell Wexler's dramatic film *Latino*. The purpose was twofold: to shoot all footage in Super 16mm for inclusion (i.e., blow-up) in his 35mm footage. And to get as much information as possible for research, dialogue, costumes, art direction, etc.

But since our research and perseverence yielded a scoop, we first broadcast the material as a series of news stories on the CBS Evening News.

Up to that point, the Contras were just a rumor. Everyone knew they were there, but no one had seen them or could get to them. Or could prove the connection between the US military and the Contras, prove that there ac-

*The film is being shown along with *Nicaragua: Report from the Front*.

tually was American aid going to the Contras.

After we put the program on the CBS Evening News, we had masses of footage left over. Maybe thirty hours of very good footage. And we decided to do something with it, especially because many of our friends kept persuading us to make a half hour film out of it all. So we turned all the footage over to Deborah Schaffer and two coproducers, Ana Maria Garcia and Glenn Silber, who directed *El Salvador: Another Vietnam*. They raised the rest of the money, did some shooting in the states and put it together in three months. That way, Skylight Pictures was able to open both films together.

That joint opening was important because although people know that the United States is involved in Nicaragua, they don't know there is a civil war going on in Guatemala. A lot of people come to the theater because of the news hook of Nicaragua. And so the combination of the two films has been better than either of the films by themselves. And also they're very stylistically different.

Was there any time in the filming where you felt awkward? Something that you wanted to do but felt that you were too deliberately pulling it out of somebody, an interview or shot or situation?

I felt that only one time. And that was in the Nicaragua film. We snuck into Nicaragua from Honduras with a Contra patrol, who then wanted to make sure that we were involved in combat, that we shot combat. And they wanted to set up ambushes so that we would be able to film them. I really stepped away from that. I knew that they'd do that anyway, but also felt that they were doing that action for us to film. I didn't wish anyone's death merely so that we could capture it on film. I was absolutely opposed to that.

There was one other difficult occasion in *When the Mountains Tremble*. That was the funeral of the community organizer, Luis Godoy, which was a very tricky situation.

The way we found him was to go every morning at five o'clock to the firemen's main office in Guatemala City. We did this because at dawn people who found bodies would call the firemen's office and they would come and pick up the bodies. So we went out with them on several of those calls, and that's how we came across Godoy's body. His neighbors were so emotionally upset at his death, because he was a very important community leader in that poor neighborhood, that they said things to us which could endanger their lives. Especially considering everything was said full face to the camera. So we asked them, "Are you sure you want to be filmed?" And they said "Yes, yes, yes."

We followed the story all the way through the funeral, and we went back to the neighborhood a few days later and asked them again if they still wanted to be in the film. Because we knew that if the film came out in the states anybody

WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE: *The funeral of Luis Godoy*

could have access to it and their lives could be threatened. And they still said "Yes." And we said "Well, if you change your mind, here's our address in New York. And write to us and we'll take you out of the film." But they never did. People have to make decisions for themselves about when and how they're going to be heroic, and you just have to let them be able to make that decision. Make sure you've given them all the options to do that. And not just capture them in an emotionally charged situation.

What in the end does When the Mountains Tremble *mean to you?*

One thing that people always ask is "Well, what about your point of view when you went there? Did you go there with a pre-conceived idea of what you wanted to do?" What I have to say is that *When the Mountains Tremble* is actually a compilation of over a decade of experience in Latin America. And I think that the film reflects everything that we've come to know of the way certain systems and cultures operate. So we may have gone into this film knowing that we were going to explain certain things. But other things we absolutely did not know we were going to face. It's really been a combination of facing the unexpected and also using our experience and perception of covering Central America for about five years. And developing a way of understanding and communicating what we know about Central America. And here I speak for all of us because *When the Mountains Tremble*, as well as *Nicaragua*, is very much a joint effort, a combination of the different strengths of Tom Sigel, Peter Kinoy and myself. It's also the result of the effort of people we dedicate the films to: the thousands of Central Americans who risked their lives in order that we might tell their story.

LEONARD J. LEFF

Reading Kane

All this happened in much less time than it takes to tell, since I am trying to interpret for you into slow speech the instantaneous effect of visual impressions.

HEART OF DARKNESS

Charles Foster Kane's second wife has left him. In mute frustration, he throws down her suitcases and begins wrecking her overdecorated bedroom. When he comes to a glass paperweight, he stops. He shakes it and says, offscreen, "Rosebud." With his butler and other servants watching silently, he walks into one corridor, then another, out of his employees' range of vision, until he passes between two full-length mirrors. This last image of Charles Foster Kane is multiplied again and again into infinity, a powerful envoi to *Citizen Kane*'s visualization of its main character.

After Kane walks offscreen, emptying the frame of people, the camera slowly advances toward the mirror. The mirror cannot reflect Kane's servants, for they have been left behind in an adjacent corridor; but since it is a mirror and has reflected Kane's image, it must reflect something. As the camera continues its forward progress, it promises to expose—what? Raymond, the flashback's putative author? The narrator? The camera? The spectator? Here we directly confront two questions: Who is the arranger of the images? And who is watching the film? In the following essay, I wish to explore the reasons that previous answers to these questions have seemed somehow unsatisfying; I would also like to suggest a method of reading *Citizen Kane* that will allow us to understand our reactions to the film even if it does not permit us to speak conclusively of the "meaning" of the film and its surprisingly inconstant point of view.

Although critics Bruce Kawin, Nick Browne, Seymour Chatman, Brian Henderson and others have at length discussed point of view as well as the relationship between point of view and the spectator, Kawin has focused specifically on *Citizen Kane*. (See the "Works Cited" at the conclusion of this essay.) *Kane* portrays its narrators in the third person, Kawin says in *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film,* but accords their narratives a

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first-person bias. In Thatcher's story, for example, the banker's "narrating mind is offscreen. The film presents not Kane's life with Thatcher in third-person flashback but Thatcher's tale (which is presumed to be both biased and accurate) in mindscreen" (34); consequently, we understand Thatcher's intent through his deployment of camera position, montage, etc. and recognize through "the logic of their changes" his narrative bias (14).

But are *Kane*'s narrators capable of generating the film's often sophisticated *mise-en-scène*? In his interview with the "News on the March" reporter, the butler reveals an inarticulateness (Kane "did crazy things sometimes"), a limited vocabulary, a tendency to repeat himself, and a condescension toward his employer that make him, at best, a doubtful author of the "infinity of Kanes" image and its provocative coda. Thatcher's flashback presents similar problems. Through studied compositions that use deep focus, forceful images outside the banker's ken, and shots or sounds obviously from another character-narrator's sensibility, Thatcher's flashback posits the voices of other characters as well as that of a "supra-narrator," an awkward but necessary term in discussing *Citizen Kane*'s layered text. At some point in each of the flashbacks, not only does each narrator relate events at which he or she was not present, each also employs a visual and narrative style wholly at odds with his or her personality or state of mind. What these shifts in point of view *mean,* however, may ultimately matter less than what they *do*. To demonstrate, I turn to a stimulating if controversial methodology articulated by literary critic Stanley Fish.

For Fish, author of *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980), a text does not contain meaning, a reader produces it. Books are thus *objects* that readers translate into *events*. Consider the final line in Milton's "On His Blindness": "They also serve who only stand and wait." How far, we wish to know, has the speaker moved from an earlier impatience with God? To some Milton scholars, this line constitutes a profound trust in God; to others, a qualified, perhaps even forced note of affirmation. According to Fish, however, no conclusions are possible. Reading "On His Blindness" line by line, we execute a series of assumptions about the speaker and his relationship with God, each of which is undercut and no one of which is determinant. In short, the reader's experience of the uncertainty of the sonnet's last line constitutes the poem's very meaning. The parallels between literature and film are at once implicit and attractive.

Answering their detractors, reader-response critics like Fish have carefully defined "the reader." In the examination of *Citizen Kane* that follows, I have stipulated a composite "we" modelled after Michael Riffaterre's reader of "Les Chats," an informed "we" alert to what one of the cinema's most stimulating works *does*. Just as the *News on the March* reporter negotiates the post-Kane world, we negotiate *Kane;* we engage in a series of anticipations, reversals, revisions, and recoveries that forces us to examine the cognitive tasks that we as readers perform and that finally urges us to assume our role in the work's creation. The reporter opens his investigation into the mystery of Rosebud by reading a manuscript whose "objectness" is exaggerated during its presentation. He expects the diary to "make sense," but it does not: readers make sense, not texts. Accordingly, as we make our way through a "slowed down" version of a *Kane* flashback, we may evaluate each shift in point of view as it occurs and thereby not extract a meaning from the sequence but, instead, locate the moments that frustrate assumptions or expectations about point of view, describe our experience of those moments, and discover in them how if not what *Citizen Kane* means.

"She won't talk," Thompson tells his boss after his first visit to Susan Alexander Kane. Thompson's search (really Rawlston's search, for Thompson resists going) takes the reporter from the El Rancho nightclub and its torpid singer to the Thatcher Memorial Library and the marble statue of its benefactor, Walter Parks Thatcher; thus the image of a woman who will not communicate fades to the image of a man who cannot communicate. Neither augurs well for solving the mystery of Rosebud. A litany of restrictions on hours, page numbers, and quoted matter precedes Thompson's entrance through a door that closes in our face. We read this last action as prohibiting *our* entrance. Almost at once, though,

the image of the door dissolves to that of the library's inner sanctum. Outside Hollywood, to dissolve means to disintegrate, disunite, break up; the film's dissolve here does indeed separate us from our *expectation* of denied admittance, but it does not alter the *experience* of denied admittance. *Citizen Kane* continually draws us on. Will we come to know Kane or will we not? Will the film "let us in" or will it not? This and countless other moments in *Citizen Kane,* including the revelation of the flaming sled, suspend the answer, at last indefinitely. But even if we decide that we know something of Kane (or Rosebud or the little glass snow scene), the impediments to that knowledge remain part of our reading experience. In the conclusion of the essay, the implications of this point will be examined.

Aside from a portrait of Thatcher, the reading room qua vault houses the library's meager collection—one book, a "private diary." The setting's rigidity, formality, and containment suggest that even if Thatcher knew the secret of Rosebud, he might not divulge it. Nevertheless, the guard extracts the manuscript from the wall safe and, accompanied by a deathly cadence, bears it to Thompson. The library's pretensions are borne out in the halation of the diary, which along with the dramatic ritual of the receptionist and the guard may amuse us. Yet the presentation of the diary mirrors in reverse the door shut in our face; where the door frustrated our expectation of intimate knowledge of Kane, the diary promises it. "Thompson bends over to read the manuscript," states the shooting script. "Camera moves down over his shoulder onto page of manuscript" (168). Thompson, his face never seen, remains in shadow throughout the film; at once there and not there, he approaches the embodiment of what the Germans call the "fiktiver Leser"—the "fictive reader." In going "over his shoulder" to reach the narrative agency, a script direction that the film heeds and replicates with each succeeding internal narrator, camera movement denotes a text reached *through* Thompson and explicitly *read* by him. We are to identify not with Thompson but with his task, reading.

We begin our reading, literally, with the section of the Thatcher manuscript entitled "Charles Foster Kane." Thompson quickly scans a prefatory note that we hardly see, much less read. (From its text, which can be read when the film is run frame by frame, one understands at once that Thatcher's diary is really a memoir, a recollection of events written well after the date of their occurrence.) Then, at a slower speed, the camera sweeps across a page, directing us to read, "I first encountered Mr. Kane in 1871." Despite the third-person title, "Charles Foster Kane," the narrative has opened in the first person. "I," stirring a nascent assumption about tellers telling their own tales, suggests that the story will center on Thatcher, rather than "Charles Foster Kane," not a hopeful sign for a reporter or a viewer in search of an intimate view of Kane. From the news short, we know that young Charles Kane assaulted Thatcher upon their first meeting; the banker's use of "encountered" connotes also the immediate adversial relationship between the two. "Mr. Kane," referring to Charles when he was a boy, reinforces "encountered" as a lexical gesture of contempt. In short, by the time the shot of the sentence begins to dissolve, we have reached an assumption about the forthcoming image, conventionally the opening of a flashback. "I," "encountered," and "Mr. Kane" have established the emotional distance and dissonance between the writer and his fractious subject. Along with the author's personality as indicated by the surroundings and the news short, the diction promises us a ponderous, self-serving narrative, wholly without sympathy for young Kane and dominated by Thatcher's jaundiced perspective.

The opening of the Thatcher section, focusing on the young Charles Kane playing in the snow, has a distinct point of view. But whose is it? Bruce Kawin argues that each of the film's narrators maintains his equivalent of "first-person discourse"; without distortion, "Thatcher's mind dominates those portions of the film that relate his part of Kane's story" (34–35). Our moment-to-moment experience of the sequence, though, suggests a disquiet overlooked in Kawin's interpretation. In *The Magic World of Orson Welles,* James Naremore sees what happens: "At first the black dot against pure white [Charles against the snow] echoes the manuscript we have been looking at, but it swoops across the screen counter to the direction the camera has been

moving, in conflict with the stiff, prissy, banker's handwriting, suggesting the conflict between Kane and Thatcher that runs through the early parts of the movie" (41). During the dissolve from the library to Colorado, we experience a shift in expression, if not also perspective. The lighting, the music, and the very content of the opening shot argue against Thatcher's authorship. Music keyed to the gloom of the banker and his memorial, for example, lightens at Charles's appearance. A crisp three-note refrain, delicately percussive, becomes a satiny theme played legato on the strings; along with a glissando on the harp, it introduces not "Mr. Kane" but a carefree child, at one (Ira Jaffe says in "Film as the Narration of Space") with the natural universe (103). Charles's initial depiction and especially the romantic music accompanying it void our assumption that "Thatcher's mind" exercises sovereignty over his narrative.

As the spirited young boy continues playing his Civil War game, the camera draws back to reveal, sequentially, Charles's mother, future guardian, and father standing at the Kanes' window, through which we and—we now discover—they have been looking. The framing of the youth, walling him at once in and out, has been variously interpreted; Jaffe, for example, suggests that the camera's movement fixes Charles and renders "his physical existence suddenly . . . exceedingly fragile" (104). But what do the appearance of additional characters in the scene and the camera movement that effects it *do*? At first, especially as we reflect on the contrasts in music and lighting on either side of the dissolve, we perceive the scene as narrated not by Thatcher but by a supra-narrator. The moving camera's introduction of Mrs. Kane, however, causes us to revise: all along, apparently, the image of the happy child has been from his mother's perceptual point of view, one that seemingly unites the perspective and the expression. Or has it? The continued reverse tracking of the camera soon adds Thatcher to the frame. Like the weak-willed Jim Kane, he looks at Mrs. Kane, not Charles. Though she may dominate Charles ("Be careful, Charles. . . . Pull your muffler around your neck, Charles"), Thatcher dominates her. His mindscreen manifests itself not only in the room's gloomy atmosphere (which we

Welles shooting the first Thatcher scene

gradually see) but in his direction of the scene's focus away from matters of the heart and toward the affairs of business: "Mrs. Kane," he says, "I think we'll have to tell him now." Mary Kane accedes. In the course of sixty seconds, the film has offered us three different points of view—a narrator's, Mary Kane's, and Thatcher's. Although we are back where we began, those moments when our assumptions about the narrative proved premature, if not false, remain part of our experience of *Citizen Kane*.

As Mrs. Kane turns from the window, she faces Thatcher, their profiles opposite one another in the frame. "I'll sign those papers now, Mr. Thatcher," she says, and begins to walk forward. Her fixed expression, a triumph of determination over emotion, seems to drive the camera down a path that she has willed it to travel. But when the camera comes to rest, we recognize that its movement from the window has been constant and that it has led unfailingly toward the papers, Thatcher's papers, awaiting their signature. Thatcher concentrates on financial decisions, Kawin says, "not just because he is Kane's banker but because he is *a* banker" (33); the inevitability of the camera's direction, we assume, relocates the perspective and the expression in a single mindscreen, Thatcher's. A stable

camera, providing us with the first of the celebrated deep-focus shots in *Citizen Kane,* now clearly frames four characters: Mary Kane renouncing her son, Thatcher busily pushing the papers to her, Jim Kane pacing in the middle ground, and Charles—to whom all except us seem oblivious—playing happily in the snow. Once again, though, the point of view and the voice have splintered. A banker of narrow vision, Thatcher is incapable of generating the contrasts and emotions so richly elaborated through the use of deep focus. Meticulously organized, this long-enduring shot has an "authoritarian effect," James Naremore says, "the actors and the audience under fairly rigid control" (42–43). *Whose* control matters less than the implications of the shift: our assumption again proves erroneous, our expectation unfulfilled. Less than a minute into the flashback, the perceptual and the "interest" points of view as well as the perspective and the expression have fused and diverged more than three times. From whose point of view is Thatcher's story told? Our experience of the text makes any response problematic.

Having signed the papers, Mrs. Kane returns to the window. The camera, via a cut, points into the house from its position at the porch. Mrs. Kane's previous insistence on orchestrating the event ("It's going to be done exactly the way I've told Mr. Thatcher"), her resolve ("I've had [his trunk] packed for a week now"), and her expression make her the scene's dramatic center. Although deep focus is again employed, the composition offers us little of interest beyond the foreground and Mrs. Kane. Jim Kane and Thatcher stand in the middle distance where, uncharacteristically for this narrator, Thatcher hesitantly remains. Mrs. Kane's seemingly blank expression draws significance from the music, somber chords in the low register of the strings. She responds to Thatcher's comments on the practical aspects of Charles's departure, but her thoughts are obviously elsewhere. This time, the camera moves only after she does. When Mrs. Kane turns screen left to walk outside, the camera tracks left to follow her. The prevailing mindscreen seems hers. The pan across the log face of the house cuts off Thatcher in the middle of a speech: "I've arranged for a tutor to meet us in Chicago. I'd have brought him along with me. . . ." The banker chooses his words too carefully and regards himself as too important to leave any thought incomplete; the interruption of a line of his dialogue does nothing to reestablish his mindscreen. But neither does it support our assumption that Mrs. Kane narrates. We could read the incident as a representation of Mrs. Kane's selective hearing, her preoccupation with Charles obliterating the world around her. The music does suggest this continuity in point of view. The disappearance of the dialogue track, however, directly parallels only those moments when Thatcher and Mrs. Kane are out of view and thus suggests a narrating presence outside of both characters. The suspension of sound might thus signal the return of the supra-narrator or—as the camera's placement outdoors may already have anticipated—the emergence of Charles.

When Mrs. Kane exits from the door, she calls, "Charles." Her son replies from offscreen, "Lookee, Ma." Charles beckons his mother and readies us to see what he sees, perhaps *as* he sees. The camera, already outside, pulls back to position itself just behind Charles. Mrs. Kane, the only character inadequately dressed for the cold (a noteworthy point), says, "You better come inside, son." The camera's deference toward Mrs. Kane (though outside, it has centered on her) and the association of Charles with the natural world (he has even a snowy complexion) as well as his insistence that we see what he sees lend each character some claim to point of view. Just as we are tempted to anticipate the dominance of one or the other, Thatcher steps forward: "Well, well, well, that's quite a snowman." In this shot, which lacks multiplaned clarity and momentarily the scene's expressive music, an ingratiating man tries to cajole a peevish child into the adult world ("Now can we shake hands . . . what do you say? Let's shake"). The camera foregrounds the action and moves only to contain it. The image of Charles's assault on the unsuspecting banker, photographed efficiently, with no musical accompaniment, seems derived from Thatcher's mindscreen. For only the second time in the scene, we have the sense that the putative narrator and the actual narrator are one.

At Jim Kane's awkward attempt to strike Charles ("what that kid needs is a good thrashing"), Mrs. Kane enfolds her son in her arms. All of the scene's conflict between mother and father and, later, guardian and child has not obscured a question that we have been formulating and that now will be answered: why is Mrs. Kane sending away her son? The film cuts to a tight close-up of her, accompanied by a musical crescendo, as she says: Charles is "going to be brought up where [his father] can't get at him." Many consider her reason inadequate, yet it supports a common assumption about the flashback. Along with Kawin, virtually every critic regards Thatcher as the scene's constant narrator. ("The point is not that Thatcher is photographed from outside his physical viewpoint," Kawin says, "but that every scene corresponds with his personal conception of Kane, and illustrates this conception rather than subjectively records 'what happened'" [34].) If we truly regarded Thatcher as the narrator of the moment being discussed, we would celebrate Mrs. Kane's chilly response because its very tenuousness validates Thatcher as narrator. She translates her feelings into a pragmatic business decision that Thatcher would understand, accept, and

unemphatically report. But the cut to the close-up does something that no critic has acknowledged: it compromises Thatcher's mindscreen. The transfer of guardianship represents the banker's opportunity to manage a fortune, period. He has no interest in probing for the situation's psychological dimension, the possible but unarticulated reasons underlying Mrs. Kane's decision. His sensibility calls for retention of the long shot, an appropriate distance for incorporating but not highlighting what Mrs. Kane says.

More than a division between the perspective and the expression, the close-up of Mrs. Kane and the evocative music originate with a narrator eager or prepared for her response; they focus our attention exquisitely and ready us for emotions laid bare, for intimate truth. When the dialogue frustrates that expectation, we are left with a problem that the text has raised but declined to solve. Here the critics have stepped in. "The accident which made the Kanes suddenly rich," Joseph McBride explains in *Orson Welles,* "has its own fateful logic—Charles must 'get ahead'" (43). In "Power and Dis-Integration in the Films of Orson Welles," Beverle Houston argues that Mrs. Kane exacts a "cruel pleasure" by defeating the prerogative of husband and son; in her action lies "the hint of a revenge" (3). These and other interpretations, though not unreasonable, miss the point. At this moment, the text has slipped out of our control: we may not say with any certainty why Mrs. Kane sends away her son. To insist upon one reason over another is to attempt to return the responsibility for meaning to the text when it belongs with the reader. Our experience of the apparent inadequacy of Mrs. Kane's response coupled with the shift in point of view is finally the meaning of this moment in *Citizen Kane.*

Mrs. Kane explains her reason for sending away Charles and turns toward him. Moving —not tilting—down, the camera exchanges a close-up of the mother for one of the child. Charles's scowl as he looks up initially suggests again Thatcher's mindscreen. A downward angle of the camera rather than an eye-level shot would underscore this point, but Charles's defiant expression surely squares with Thatcher's perception of him. May we be sure, however, that Charles glowers at Thatcher? The boy's glance up and right could be directed at Jim Kane, who just now verbally and (almost) physically abused him and who now stands at Thatcher's immediate left. Whether Thatcher or Kane, the object of Charles's scorn becomes an ambiguity that we expect to be resolved. Jean-Pierre Oudart and Daniel Dayan's theory of the "absent one," set forth in "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," suggests that the next cut (or, alternatively, further movement of the camera) will provide the necessary reaction shot. If Jim Kane is its subject, it will support Mrs. Kane's explanation for apparently spurning Charles, a justification that Thatcher would be likely to accept at face value and duly report. If Thatcher is its subject, it will reveal yet a different object of the hostile young Kane's wrath. Thatcher's mindscreen, of course, could project either shot.

From Charles's sullen face, the film cuts to neither Thatcher nor the father. Instead, it dissolves to the boy's sled. The sound of a train whistle far in the distance, connoting Kane and his guardian's movement east, temporally links Thatcher to the on-screen image; the insistent, hurrying whistle punctuates his earlier haste to catch the train. But even though the sound track might reflect Thatcher's aural perspective, the imagery makes his origination of the shot problematic. To Thatcher, the sled is a weapon in his "encounter" with "Mr. Kane"; he refuses even to discuss the sled when directly questioned about it during a congressional investigation (depicted in the "News on the March" short). The tremulous music and the long duration of the shot (actually two shots subtly joined by a dissolve) give the image an almost melancholy placidity, one whose tone conflicts with the banker's attitude toward Charles and his desire to put Colorado behind them. So the dissolve from Charles's face to the sled not only frustrates our expectation that we will discover the object of the boy's scorn but also calls into question Thatcher's mindscreen.

The image of the sled could well be Mrs. Kane's projection. Throughout the preceding scene, she has frequently appeared distant. When she watches Charles playing in the snow ("I've got his trunk all packed"), her look is fixed, contemplative. The sled tells us nothing more about why she sends away her son, but in its lingering stillness, perhaps evoking the absent boy, it seems a perfect object of her gaze. And though Thatcher has gone, the Colorado setting remains, making her a viable choice as narrator. Because it follows the shot of Charles's face, however, the image of the sled could also be his projection. Earlier we felt the imminence of his mind's eye; perhaps here we discover not *who* he looks at but *what,* in mindscreen. In the parlor car with Thatcher, listening to the plaintive whistle of the train carrying him far from home, he

might be thinking of the sled. Read from his mental perspective, the image might seem to embody his loneliness. Finally, of course, a supra-narrator might generate the image of the sled. In tone, it resembles many similar shots in the film's opening scene, presumably authored by the supra-narrator; like them, it is bracketed by dissolves and accompanied by an unmelodic musical theme. In brief, the shot of the sled proceeds from an author whom we may not identify with any certainty. The shot thus doubly frustrates expectation.

In the next scene, we see paper being torn from a package. A still youthful Charles is opening his Christmas present, a new sled. "Well, Charles," Thatcher says offscreen. A pause follows this line, which concludes, "Merry Christmas." "Well, Charles," the line may mean, "here's exactly what you asked for." This scene privileges Charles: a head-on shot of him looking up at Thatcher concludes with a tilt up to a low-angle shot of Thatcher looming over him. Thatcher's mindscreen predominates. Charles's "Merry Christmas," which connotes surly ingratitude and is photographed from Thatcher's point of view, squares with Thatcher's view of the boy as presented at the congressional investigation. The next two scenes, showing Thatcher's increasing exasperation with Charles's profligacy and his foolish belief that "it would be fun to run a newspaper," also suggest his mindscreen; the camera moves in tandem with him as he dictates a letter to urge responsibility on his charge, and when the scene concludes, Thatcher's eye directly meets the camera's lens, as if to bond the narrator and the narratee. In the succeeding montage, however, Thatcher's dyspepsia while reading issues of the *Inquirer* becomes the butt of a cinematic joke. The dynamic visuals, the pulsating editing rhythm, and the high-spirited music convey none of the dryness of Thatcher's prose; they lead us, in short, to conclude that in this most unstable of texts, the narrator has again changed.

The montage functions as a lively curtain-raiser to Thatcher's first direct confrontation with the adult Kane. The film's second-time viewer draws an inescapable conclusion from the scene. An "emperor of newsprint," Kane galvanizes the *Inquirer,* a sleepy daily paper with a genteel staff. On one occasion, as Bernstein's flashback shows, he has his reporters impersonate the police, bully the husband of a presumably missing Brooklyn woman, and trump up a front-page story where no story exists. Kane calls this "the truth" and delivers it "quickly and simply and entertainingly." The montage that drives Thatcher into Kane's office mirrors Kane's philosophy of yellow journalism—it is entertaining, zestful, and inflammatory. The montage represents the pounding of Thatcher as the young Kane might imagine it, perhaps through "the field of the mind's eye."

Linked seamlessly to the montage, the scene in the *Inquirer* office moves Kane center screen. If, as Bruce Kawin argues, Thatcher narrates it through mindscreen, the banker chooses uncharacteristically to minimize his presence. "Bernstein appears in all the scenes he relates," Kawin tells us, "and the camera continually pays attention to him" (35); Kawin can make no such statement about Thatcher. The banker, dressed in black, appears at the periphery of the frame, almost blending in with the screen's dark border. Kane, on the other hand, appears in the center in white. Although the parallel placement of Thatcher and the camera might seem to bond these two as narrators, Kane dominates the scene and sets the tone. The "I" of the Thatcher manuscript is simply in eclipse.

Again, James Naremore describes what we see:

> [Kane] is at his most charming and sympathetic during the early scene in the newspaper office, where his potential danger is underlined, but where he is shown as a darkly handsome, confident young man, loyal to his friends and passionate about his work. This is, in fact, the point of Welles's full-scale entry into the film, and it is predictably stunning. . . . Here at last, greeted by a triumphal note of Herrmann's music, is the young Welles of Mars panic fame (79–80).

But which Welles? The celebrity? Though he may be drawing on his confrontations with naysayers in radio or the theater, Welles seems to be doing more than "playing himself." In this scene Kane assumes the role in which he has cast himself, the crusading journalist whose pleasure it is both to "look after the interests of the underprivileged" and in the process, apparently, to thwart his ex-guardian. As he will win over the *Inquirer*'s sub-

scribers, he wins us over by letting us experience his exuberance, his power to captivate the readers of newspapers and films. Naremore calls Kane's (Welles's) entrance "predictably stunning." What stuns us, even in a text whose inconstancy of point of view has been established, is the exchange of Thatcher's harsh perspective for a point of view so strongly indicative of Kane's mindscreen.

Countering his guardian's protest that the *Inquirer* will drain his capital, Kane admits that he will lose at least $3 million on the paper. "You know, Mr. Thatcher, at the rate of a million dollars a year . . ." (at this point, the film cuts from the medium shot of the two men to a close-up of Kane, his eyebrows lifted in mockery of Thatcher) ". . . I'll have to close this place in sixty years." When audiences laugh at this punch line, as they invariably do at screenings I have attended, they are responding positively to this "charming and sympathetic" man. Kawin might have argued (though he does not) that the close-up proceeds from Thatcher's mindscreen in order to demonstrate what a smark aleck Kane really is. Yet the music that punctuates Kane's line—a muted horn playing a presto version of the "newspaper theme"—snickers (as Kane does) at Thatcher's narrow conservatism. This witty, idealistic newspaper publisher conjures up an appealing persona in this scene of the film, and after taunting Thatcher throughout it, he even gives himself the last spoken word. From the driving energy of the montage to the conspiratorial intimacy of the close-up, we seem to experience through Kane's own perspective the Kane that Bernstein, Leland, Susan, and so many others fell for. The close-up, excluding Thatcher, the newspaper office, and the rest of the film's world, brings us into such close proximity to Kane that we neither desire nor expect a return to a narrative frame whose existence has all but been forgotten. A very rapid dissolve, however, exchanges Kane's smiling face for our second glimpse at Thatcher's manuscript: "In the winter of 1929 he . . ." This entry hardly gives Thatcher "the last word": it describes an event that occurred over thirty years after his confrontation at the *Inquirer,* when general economic conditions, not the management of the newspaper, disabled Kane. Thatcher's cheerless control of the narrative has nonetheless returned and with it the need for our renegotiation of the text.

Some may reject the notion that *Citizen Kane* asserts Kane's mindscreen; after all, Kane dies in the opening scene. Yet the film's framing structure has only a superficial integrity, whose violation we experience less than sixty seconds into the first flashback. (Note, too, that although we *assume* that the dying man is Kane, we *see* only his silhouette and a fragment of his face.) Throughout *Citizen Kane,* we experience a divergence between perspective and expression and, moreover, between the putative narrator and the actual narrator that seems to make tenable, however unexpected or improbable, the presumably dead Kane's somehow being brought to life. Exhilarating and perplexing in the short run, what do these glimpses into Kane's world through Kane's mind's eye do? They return us to the film, again and again, to discover what we already know to be true but cannot quite accept. Each interpreter of *Citizen Kane* has a different slant on it: James Naremore tells us that Rosebud is important, Robert Carringer (in "Rosebud, Dead or Alive") that the glass paperweight is important, Ira Jaffe that window imagery is important. The fact that essayists continue to argue for a thematic center in *Citizen Kane* suggests the weaknesses of the formalists' approach: no one answer can satisfy us. Despite what these and other critics tell us, the text does not stand still; it continually challenges us *not* to settle on sleds, paperweights, or windows. The sporadic, ephemeral, yet insistent suggestions of the Kane mindscreen constitute a major index to the text's instability, which response-centered criticism allows us to apprehend. As Stanley Fish says, it permits us to "*slow down* the reading experience so that 'events' one does

not notice in normal time, but which do occur, are brought before our analytical attentions" (28). What we know of *Citizen Kane,* whether its symbolism or its point of view, we know only through the activity of reading, our making of assumptions, revisions, and new expectations. In a temporal interpretation of the film, based on our moment-by-moment experience of it, we finally discover all that we know of the text.

From its opening credits and first sequence, with its persistent advancing camera, *Citizen Kane* raises and frustrates the reader's expectation of coming to know Kane. Our consistently revised assumptions, however, permit us to experience and learn the work's very object lesson, the danger of closing on the text. This strategy of reader education continues to the end of *Citizen Kane.* In Xanadu's Great Hall, a frustrating search behind us, we believe with Thompson that no word can explain a man's life; as the camera retreats from Thompson and his colleagues and we see the clutter that Kane has left behind, we recognize that Rosebud is indeed "a"—not "the" —missing piece to a jigsaw puzzle. But a dissolve to the cellar changes the camera's direction, from withdrawal to advancement. Above the boxes and crates, we move forward, apparently *toward* something. The camera probes, the music builds, and suddenly the sled and its emblazoned name appear before us. Robert Carringer warns us against accepting the sled as "the principal insight into Kane" (185), while Joseph McBride argues that the shot of the sled "does in fact solve nothing" (43). If not "the principal insight," however, "Rosebud" is *an* insight. And although it may not unlock the psychology of Kane's character, it provides a referent for the film's first spoken word and grants us at least nominally what for almost two hours we have longed to know.

Irrespective of "meaning," the shot of the sled gives many viewers a rush; it *does* something to them. With the roll on the timpani and the swelling ritardando, we experience a long-delayed pleasure that we perhaps had assumed, especially given the film's lack of convention, would be denied us. The shot of the sled is particularly felicitous because it seems just compensation for the disappointments and frustrations that we have endured. It may not "solve" anything of major significance in Kane's life, but it gives the film—and us—a sense of closure. Indeed, the shot of the sled concludes with a fade out, leading us to expect a title card that reads "The End." But a fade-in returns us to the exterior of the mansion, where black smoke rises from the furnace chimney. With a dissolve we are immediately before the chain link fence, and as the music becomes eerier, more somber, we follow the camera down to the "No Trespassing" sign. Draining the excitement of the shot of the sled, this anticlimactic sequence seems to introduce a more restrained voice into the narrative. Let us consider, moment by moment, the film's proffered solutions to the Kane enigma: Thompson argues inexplicability. To formalist critics, the audience's euphoria on discovering at least the identity of Rosebud means nothing in light of the recognition that the audience is back where it began. Yet the experience of having the ostensibly conclusive answer to Kane's character superceded by the unsettling image of the sign draws attention to our wish for compact solutions to complex problems. The act of knowing, we come to realize, is a temporal process, based on assumptions ever subject to question, challenge, and revision.

Superimposed over a shot of the mansion and its massive initialled iron gate, the words "The End" appear. A trumpeting resolving chord concludes the music as the image fades out. Five seconds pass, the screen silent and dark. We do not assume, we know: the film has at last ended. Then, however, a title card fades in; The Mercury Theater, it notes, proudly introduces the cast. Outtakes have recently been used as codas to some Burt Reynolds films and, more trenchantly, to *Being There* (1979). The tail credits for *Citizen Kane,* though, contain no gaffes. On screen, the principals reprise a line of dialogue. Though each shot seems to have been lifted from the film proper, all of the footage comes from alternate takes, most of them containing less incisive readings than those in the body of the film. These visual tail credits constitute pieces of a rough draft designed by the implied author to reveal for the last time his strategy of betrayed expectations. We may infer from them the existence of not only

other Kanes but other *Kanes*. Who is Kane? As even the music suggests, we can never know. The rhythmic theme that accompanies the tail credits resembles the spirited "chasers" used to empty theaters between screenings in the nickelodeon era; it is heard earlier, of course, as the song that attempts to build the myth of "good old Charlie Kane." Its words carry an insistent refrain: "Who is this one . . . who is this one . . . what is his name . . . what is his name?" The very opening of *Citizen Kane,* which teasingly heralds the name and apparently the identity of the film's central character, also introduces through its truncated credits the first frustrated expectation. Although the tail credits now fulfill one aspect of that expectation, they do not include Orson Welles/Charles Kane among the images of the "principal actors." The absence of Kane and the reprise of that rousing campaign song with its interrogative lyrics signal for one last time Kane's elusiveness. Where is Kane? Who is that man? These two implied and unanswered questions, part of our experience of the film's last moments, suspend, indefinitely, our closing on *Citizen Kane*.

All of us who study *Citizen Kane* share an intellectual pleasure in it, but do we return to the film because we seek fresh support for our theses (Rosebud is/is not significant) or because we find our theses inadequate to explain the film's hold over us? Each of the work's putative narrators claims special knowledge of Kane. Thatcher entitles his journal entry "Charles Foster Kane," suggesting its comprehensiveness. Leland remembers "absolutely everything" about Kane, and even after a night of drinking, Susan tells Thompson that "a lot comes into my mind about Charlie Kane." The supra-narrator descends upon the burning sled with complete confidence in its unifying symbolic value; the shot provides the visual equivalent of Raymond's assured boast, "I tell you about Rosebud." Critics of *Citizen Kane* close on the film with no less certainty. But how valid is their analysis? In interpreting *Citizen Kane,* they neglect our experience of *Citizen Kane,* of the cinematic techniques—the long take, moving camera, deep focus—that lead to assumptions unfulfilled, of the shifting points of view that promise and ultimately frustrate our ability to draw definite conclusions about Kane, of our impossible goal of extracting a meaning from this or any work.

Tennyson's Ulysses calls "experience . . . an arch wherethrough / Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades / Forever and forever when I move." Ulysses's experience of life resembles our experience of this remarkable film. As we read *Citizen Kane,* the "meaning" seems never present but always ahead. In any reader-centered text, inexhaustible and forever potential, closure is impossible. Thompson's conclusion says as much for *Citizen Kane:* no "word [read 'text'] can explain a man's life." Since readers, not words, produce meaning, the reading of Kane (and *Kane*) will never be finished. Nor should it be. "Coming to the point," Stanley Fish writes, "is the goal of a criticism that believes in content, in extractable meaning, in the utterance as a repository. Coming to the point fulfills a need that most literature deliberately frustrates (if we open ourselves to it), the need to simplify and close. Coming to the point should be resisted . . ." (52). Each time we watch *Citizen Kane,* we have at hand the answer to its ambiguities. The very activity of reading brings *Kane* into existence: in the making and revising of assumptions about the text, its point of view and other myriad complexities, we actualize it, and when we have concluded our reading of *Kane,* only our experience of *Kane* remains.

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DAVID BALDWIN

L'Atalante and the Maturing of Jean Vigo

The artistic miracle that is *Zéro de Conduite* has, in common with all the very few first films which contain in unpolished form the radical power of genius, the quality of being constantly astonished by itself. Film for the unfledged artist is, by the unique circumstances of its creation, the most serendipitous medium. A novelist or painter usually has the evidence of his talent in hand before he tries to notify the world of it, but the beginning director somehow has to assemble, at enormous cost of time and energy, all the necessary elements—financial backing, a cast and crew, technical facilities, official cooperation—before he can demonstrate his divine right to direct. It is certain that Vigo had his story very clearly in his mind when he walked into the studio (he could not have survived otherwise), but most of the film was shot so rapidly, with so many scenes rewritten and then recorded in a single take, that Vigo had no choice but to discover himself as he went along. The resulting work is both terribly amateurish and startlingly self-assured; it has many of the faults but almost all of the virtues of immaturity.[1]

There are scenes which seem attenuated and poorly staged, such as the conference between the head supervisor and the dwarf principal. But this is intercut with the lovely sequence in which the merry young junior master, Huguet, leads his charges on a Sunday outing through the village, while that other child, the camera, follows him, popping up in the most unexpectedly right places, drawing laughter from the incongruity between the ebullient freedom of the children and their seamless unity. The film as a whole may be compared to that procession of urchins: anarchic but orderly, ragtag yet ineffably perfect.

No film-maker, however original, can sustain such exuberance and spontaneity over an entire career. (Strangely enough, that most ironic and sophisticated of directors, Buñuel, has probably come closest to this ideal.) So perhaps it was fortunate for Vigo that the subject of his subsequent film, *L'Atalante,* was imposed on him by his producer. With *Zéro de Conduite,* Vigo had found the proper form for an emotion that was central to his experience; with *L'Atalante,* he took a theme that was alien to him and by means of his instinctive gift absorbed it completely into the artistic world that *Zéro* had built. This strange and elusive work made its director a master, and I cannot be the only one who, seeing it for the first time, imagined it to be the film its creator had always dreamed of making.[2]

It is possible to overstress the movie's strangeness. Mundane activities, such as washing clothes, cleaning floors, eating a meal, are shown as simply as any advocate of naturalism could wish. All the characters' actions are presented within a very circumscribed narrative frame; the only scene which is blatantly antirealistic is the famous one in which the hero, Jean, while swimming, sees the gigantic image of his beloved floating in the water.

Yet the atmosphere of dream subtly pervades almost everything in the film. The tone is one of delicately surreal humor which never sinks to whimsicality. *L'Atalante* is the exact opposite of a film like *Miracle in Milan,* with

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It is possible to overstress the movie's strangeness. Mundane activities, such as washing clothes, cleaning floors, eating a meal, are shown as simply as any advocate of naturalism could wish. All the characters' actions are presented within a very circumscribed narrative frame; the only scene which is blatantly antirealistic is the famous one in which the hero, Jean, while swimming, sees the gigantic image of his beloved floating in the water.

Yet the atmosphere of dream subtly pervades almost everything in the film. The tone is one of delicately surreal humor which never sinks to whimsicality. *L'Atalante* is the exact opposite of a film like *Miracle in Milan,* with

its magic doves and angels that stop for traffic lights. Such a picture is like a man who makes up tall stories for children. The pleasure for both teller and audience is in the outlandishness that constantly surpasses itself without severing the tenuous thread of the tale's logic. When such a storyteller succeeds (as De Sica and Zavattini did), the results can be memorable, but the fantasy has no resonance. A sense of incongruity is not the same as a sense of mystery.

L'Atalante has nothing of the tall tale about it. The strangest conceits—the sailor's disembodied hands that Père Jules keeps in a jar or his sudden decision to have his hair cut almost to the scalp by a dog barber—are all displayed within the context of character. The people in the film, their longings and imaginings and fears, are the source of its imagery, and Vigo creates for them a poetic aura which connects their individual emotions with common human desire and loss.

When I say that Vigo matured with this film, I mean that he had begun to exercise the full control over his style that had been absent from his début. This style comprises conflicting tendencies toward expansion and extreme compression; that is, an opposition between a lyrical and a grotesque mode of perception. The lyrical mode is characterized by the expansion of a particular action in order to lend the mood created by that action its maximum emotional expressiveness and force. One of the ways this effect is achieved is by deliberately prolonging the time span in which the act is contemplated. The most famous example of the lyrical element in Vigo's work occurs in *Zéro de Conduite,* with the children's midnight march through the dormitory (one of the most beautiful uses of slow motion in the history of the screen), in which Vigo employs the imagery of a religious procession to bless the boys' revolution.

The grotesque mode is marked by a sort of caricaturing of the face of reality, using elliptical editing, disorienting camera angles and shock effects to exaggerate some inherently bizarre action or circumstance. The most vivid grotesque scene in *Zéro* is the one in which the dwarf principal nervously and incoherently lectures the frail schoolboy Tabard on the dangers of establishing too close an intimacy with an older friend. In the scene's final shot, the dwarf suddenly pops up like a malign Jack-in-the-box, beard bristling, and shouts: "Who knows?" That there is no preparation for this metamorphosis is the key to the director's method. He explores a situation in order to bring out what is absurd or strange in it, discovers the unique visual image that will best convey that strangeness, and quickly moves on.

The stress between the lyrical and grotesque elements in his style is one of the things that make Vigo's films so disorienting. His movies have no *pace:* any given scene is liable to be stretched to the limits of its eloquence (but never beyond) or squeezed until only its dramatic essence remains. This film artist, more than most, plays Time like a composer, subtly manipulating it at will.

The opening sequence of *L'Atalante* exemplifies the ways Vigo achieved mastery of his stylistic traits. The film begins with three establishing shots: the boat of the title lying at anchor in a small river town; a view of the river, over which a thick mist mysteriously rises; a church steeple. The three images show the heroine's two worlds—the land (church) and the river—as well as the boat which links them and will eventually reconcile them.

The next shot shows the old ship's mate, Père Jules (Michel Simon), and the adolescent cabin boy (Louis Lefèvre) running along the side of the church in the speeded-up tempo of silent film comedies, recalling Vigo's expressed preference for the silent film over sound.[3] This is followed by a view of the newly married couple—Juliette (Dita Parlo) in her dazzlingly white gown, Jean (Jean Dasté) somewhat stiff in his barge captain's uniform—leaving the church, with the guests exiting behind them. From snatches of conversation, the viewer quickly understands the situation: the barge captain is a stranger to the town, the courtship was an extraordinarily fast one, and the decision of Juliette to marry the captain was in part a quiet act of defiance against the town and is perceived as such by the townspeople.

The director reinforces the aloneness of the couple in the subsequent shot, which shows them walking with exaggerated dignity towards the boat, while the crowd (in a departure from the script) follows at a considerable distance. The extreme gravity of the bride

and groom and the speed with which they walk do not provoke the viewer to laughter, though he may notice that they do not go in unison and that their seemingly determined steps are really very timid and tentative. This image, which is of longer duration than almost any other in the film, poignantly conveys this particular couple's estrangement from the world.

Intercut with this lyrical passage is the sequence showing Père Jules and the cabin boy at the river bank. While rehearsing the dance with which they intend to welcome Jean and Juliette to the barge, they kick the bride's bouquet off the bank and into the water. Trying to find a substitute, the boy goes off to the fields and returns with a grotesque horseshoe of wild flowers. The current reverses, bringing back to the dock the original bouquet, which the boy retrieves. All this low-comedy business is presented by Vigo with fast editing and harsh camera angles, contrasting the clumsiness of the old man and boy with the dignity of the couple.

When the captain and Juliette finally reach the dock, the boy hands them the dripping bouquet. Here there is a strange close-up of the bride, her heavy-lidded eyes conveying an extraordinary loneliness and melancholy. The image of the lovers united against a hostile world has given way to the image of the solitary frightened individual. Whenever I have seen the film in a theater where there were more than a handful of people, this shot has always provoked loud laughter. I do not know if Vigo intended this reaction, but it is not inappropriate. As wistful and pathetic as her expression is, her situation remains essentially a comic one.

The boat, with Juliette on board, is finally ready to cast off. As it moves away from the dock, the happy groom at the pilot's wheel cheers and waves his cap in the air. But the wedding party, filmed from Jean's point of view, stands rigidly on the river bank in grim, nightmarish silence.

This whole introductory passage is a kind of *précis* of the director's style—Vigo in concentrate. There is also something new to the artist here, an ability to use the different aspects of his style to exhibit character. Juliette, who softens the overwhelmingly masculine ambiance of the barge, gets the lion's share of the movie's lyrical, expansive moments, while Père Jules, a character almost as anarchic and beast-like as Boudu the tramp in Renoir's film (a role also played by Michel Simon) is presented in scenes as rough-edged, abrupt and unruly as himself. It should be emphasized that the grotesque images associated with Père Jules are not less poetic than the gentler ones associated with Juliette. In some ways, they are *more* poetic. The lovely, strange, mercurial individuality of the old man invites Vigo's artistic sympathy far more than the conventional beauty of the heroine. Similarly, Dita Parlo, a charming and admirable actress, is no competition for Michel Simon, whose instincts are so sure that he seems to become the sea-scarred shipmate, the "premental old man,"[4] he is playing.

One of the film's most important scenes, both for the delineation of the character of Jules and for Vigo's treatment of the grotesque, is the one in which Jules gives Juliette a guided tour of his cabin. One of the first objects he shows her is a puppet representing a long-haired, rather seedy orchestra conductor. He sets the mechanism of the toy going and there is a marvelous close-up of the doll, lit harshly from below, passionately (or drunkenly) directing a little music-box tune as if it were a Wagner overture. The goal of drawing Juliette (and the viewer) into the old sailor's magical world is achieved.

This image, however, is not isolated. It is repeated, very beautifully and artistically, much later in the film. Juliette, stranded in Paris, wishes to buy a ticket for a train that will bring her to the next city at which the barge is scheduled to dock, there to be reunited with Jean. But an emaciated-looking young man trails her, and as she stands at the

ticket booth groping in her purse for the money, the man snatches it. In his haste the thief drops the purse (Juliette never recovers it) and the angry mob, in a high-angle shot, closes round him and knocks him down. In the following shot, the police are shown taking him away, an iron fence intervening between the culprit and the camera, and the thief's movements as he is being dragged along startlingly evoke those of the mechanical conductor, minus almost all of the puppet's energy and passion, as if the conductor-thief were running down and were just about to stop. Such linkings between scenes, so typical of the director's mature style, are made so subtly that they tend to go unnoticed; only in later viewings do these correspondences of mood and image become clear.

Encouraged by Juliette's delight in his puppet, Père Jules continues to show off his possessions. As the camera follows them, hovering above and slightly behind them, they circle the room, admiring his hunting horn, an elephant's tooth, a large Spanish knife, the ancient photo of the girl he left behind in San Francisco and a pair of pickled hands (belonging to a long-dead fellow sailor) preserved in a jar. Not content with exhibiting these souvenirs, Jules takes off his shirt and displays the ones on his body—his numerous tattoos. Salles-Gomes in his book on Vigo claims that "the apparent disorder in Père Jules' behavior in this situation corresponds to the patient and systematic method of a Don Juan seducer."[5] This statement, implying that the seduction of Juliette is Jules's conscious aim, strikes me as absurd, given the context of the scene. The bonds that have joined these two happy conspirators are a common childishness (not a flaw, in Vigo's view) and a shared resentment of the increasingly despotic behavior of Jean. Up to this point, there has been no contact between them that could justly be called sexual.

Juliette's innocent flirtatiousness, however, begins to surface as she plays with the old man's hair and falls onto his bunk, laughing. Jules leans over her and there is a very brief low-angle shot of the two characters, with Jules's face at the center of the composition. Michel Simon in this odd moment expresses desire in a unique way: the sailor recognizes for the first time that his captain's wife is not

merely a playmate but a woman to be loved, and his face is subdued, even grieved, by lust. He instinctively starts to move away when Jean suddenly enters the cabin and, assuming the worst, explodes with rage. Andrew Sarris once wrote about a scene in a John Ford film which revealed a subtle truth about a minor character: "if it had taken [Ford] any longer than three shots and a few seconds to establish this insight . . . the point would not be worth making."[6] Vigo uses an even more rigorous economy of style to express the poignancy of the old mate's (not fully conscious) sexual conflict.

One of the movie's loveliest lyrical conceits is the use of similar environments as backgrounds to link the couple emotionally after they have been separated. When Juliette mutinies and goes on her brief fling in Paris, Jean, fed up with his bride's caprices, orders Jules to cast off. Juliette returns to the quay to find the boat gone. The grayness of the humid air at dawn, combined with the desolate setting of sand and stone and steel uprights, makes vivid Juliette's desperate isolation.

When Jean later realizes that his separation from Juliette is permanent, he falls into such a profound depression that he becomes virtually a zombie. At the dock at Le Havre, he sits staring into space and then suddenly runs away from Père Jules. In a wonderful panning shot, Jean dashes to the sea as if to find his wife there. The viewer first sees him in the distance, the camera positioned close to the ground. Jean comes up to within a few yards of the camera and speeds away, as the sand on the beach, the sun hitting it just right, glistens in the footprints he has left behind him, until in the middle distance he finally reaches the sea and stops. The shot is beautiful, and it beautifully corresponds, in its brilliant use of grays (by the late cinematographer Boris Kaufman), to the earlier shot of Juliette at the quay. The use of the camera in the two scenes, however, is very different: typically, Vigo eschews any strictly symmetrical scheme.

The most striking example of visual "coincidences" linking husband and wife occurs after the passage in which the captain sees his wife's image floating in the water. When he pulls himself out of the river, and old Jules and the cabin boy demonstrate to him the miracle of the broken phonograph that now plays a lovely Maurice Jaubert waltz, Jean breaks away from them and goes to the stern of the barge. He gazes there at a bridge receding in the distance, seeking Juliette, and the next shot shows her standing upon a similar bridge in Paris (with the Jaubert music still playing on the sound track), so that the viewer, accustomed to the shot-reverse shot rhythm of conventional movies, unconsciously looks beyond the heroine to search for a non-existent barge in the background.

The viewer is then shown Jean undressing for bed in his cabin, while Juliette in her squalid rented room does the same. As Jean drags himself into bed, she climbs into hers, and there follows a series of dissolves depicting the couple passing a miserably sleepless night (the use of the dissolve suggesting an interminable series of such nights) in their separate rooms. Vigo illuminates the faces and bodies of the two actors through a kind of netting, so that they seem to be covered all over with black spots, as if they were suffering from some contagious disease. The arching of one back is echoed by the arching of another; the movement of one head wearily raising itself towards the camera is completed by its counterpart dropping back onto the pillow. The two characters seem to be groping towards one another, as if seeking some *Persona*-like fusion of being, but this fails and they collapse into a weariness beyond sleep—as the Jaubert waltz finally ends. Of all the lyrical sequences in the film, this is the most ambitious and best sustained.

The climactic scene of *L'Atalante* wonderfully harmonizes the opposing tendencies of Vigo's style. The old man, finding the situation on board the barge intolerable, goes off to find Juliette. Meanwhile, she, unable to get work in Paris, wanders into a record store and approaches the woman behind the cashier's window to ask for a job, but is rebuffed. Drifting over to the opposite side of the store, she discovers a counter above which are situated a bank of earphones through which customers can sample new records. Juliette notices that the tired cashier is becoming increasingly drowsy and she watches as the woman begins to nod off. As soon as she is completely asleep, Juliette picks up one of the earphones and listens to a charming Maurice Jaubert tune, which is also broadcast through a loudspeaker onto the street outside the store. Jules hears it, is captivated by it and, temporarily deflected from his "impossible" search, enters the record store.

There follows a two-shot in which Père Jules tenderly approaches Juliette, who is too caught up in the music to notice him. The next shot shows the glass countertop in which are reflected the two faces; she looks down and recognizes Jules. Earlier, Jean in his fit of jealous rage had broken the old man's mirror, leaving him to mutter solemnly about evil omens. The rift between the couple that this act of violence presaged is, in the penultimate scene, healed through the agency of another "mirror" that revives the conspiratorial friendship of the two companions, leading in turn to the reconciliation of the lovers.

In the succeeding high-angle shot, the viewer at first sees only the countertop and the earphones. Juliette backs into the frame from the right until she stands within the left half of the frame. Jules enters from the right and comes to a stop opposite her. The look on Dita Parlo's face is a marvellous mixture

of bewilderment, delight and apprehension; Michel Simon's expression is similar to the one in the cabin scene, in which he is overcome by desire. The viewer waits, expecting Jules to speak, but instead he suddenly lifts her over his shoulder like cargo and carries her off, as screaming bystanders enter the frame in their wake.

This scene, of course, by using Jules as an intermediary, resolves the dramatic conflict between husband and wife. But it also resolves the battle within Jules's soul. By "shanghaing" Juliette, the old sailor is able to act out his fantasy of continuing virility (much more important to him than actual seduction), while serving his friend the captain as well as his own sense of decency. When the two characters arrive at the boat, Jules can now very tenderly, and a trifle sadly, surrender the woman to her husband. Near the beginning of the film, the old man stops at the font of the church to cross himself and mumblingly repeats the priest's words: "I pronounce you man and wife in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In the final scene, Jules is wordlessly acting the role of priest, uniting the couple in a richer, deeper union.

I am aware, as I write about Jules's "capture" of Juliette, that it would require another article entirely to account for the singular beauty of the scene. The lyrical elements (e.g., the music used as a means of drawing the characters together) and the grotesque elements (Père Jules carrying Juliette off from the record shop) are blended so skillfully that they seem nearly indistinguishable aspects of the same strange and lovely dream. The camera angles are astonishingly fresh and vivid; Vigo seems to have been almost incapable psychologically of placing the camera in the positions dictated by conventional film-making. Assymmetrical compositions, seemingly random but in fact quite logical high-angle shots, the refusal to let the camera follow the characters as they wander out of the frame —these are some characteristic features of his style, here as elsewhere. As to the editing, it is almost beyond praise. It is far from the kind of cutting that is lauded as "seamless." It is swift, elliptical, nervous, the technique of someone who wishes to excite and provoke. In all these respects—stylistic harmony, camera placement, editing—this scene is beyond anything attempted in *Zéro de Conduite.*

When an artist dies young, there is a tendency to focus so sharply on the tragedy of lost potential that it is tragically easy to lose sight of what was achieved. For the admirers of Jean Vigo, who did not reach thirty, the temptation to morbid regret and moot speculation would seem to be particularly powerful. Yet this danger has for the most part been averted, and I believe that the reason for this is the fact that Vigo's career did not end with *Zéro de Conduite.* If it had, dismissing his initial masterpiece as a fluke would have been an easy matter. Because of *L'Atalante,* we see *Zéro* not as an isolated tour de force, but as the beginnings of a fluid, dynamic, surprisingly varied style capable of being adapted to a wide range of expressive purposes. The artist, in his second work, had gained a new discipline and control over his technique, polishing and refining it without sacrificing its freshness and flow. Just as importantly, he had been able to transcend his private obsessions, or rather to shape recalcitrant material to the contours of his obsessions.

The life and career of Jean Vigo are fascinating for many reasons, not least as a study in unrelenting frustration, controversy and sheer bad luck. The son of a legendary anarchist, he saw his films fall into the hands of the anarchist's twin enemies: the bureaucrats (who banned *Zéro de Conduite*) and the businessmen (who mutilated *L'Atalante* for "commercial" reasons). Yet Vigo, in many ways the most tragic of all great directors, was sufficiently fortunate not to have died before having attained mastery of his noble art.

NOTES

1. I refer to *Zéro de Conduite* here as the artist's "first film" because the two short works that preceded it—*A Propos de Nice* and *Taris*—are in a sense essays, experiments in form and style which, though touched with Vigo's unique visual poetry, are not fully realized and self-contained aesthetic statements, as *Zéro* clearly is.

2. All information on the origin and development of Vigo's films is taken from *Jean Vigo* by P. E. Salles-Gomes (University of California Press, 1971), the definitive biography of Vigo and the most important full-length critical study of his work. The account of the making of *L'Atalante* appears on pp. 150–184. (Any differences of opinion I may express with some of Salles-Gomes's interpretations should in no way be construed as a general criticism of his admirable and moving work.)

3. Salles-Gomes, p. 71.

4. James Agee, *Agee On Film,* Vol. 1, p. 265, from the review of *L'Atalante* in *The Nation,* July 12, 1947.

5. Salles-Gomes, p. 164.

6. Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema,* p. 47 (Dutton, 1968).

Reviews

A LOVE IN GERMANY

(Eine Liebe in Deutschland) **Directed by Andrzej Wajda. Screenplay by Bolesław Michałek, Agnieszka Holland, and Wajda, from a novel by Rolf Hochhuth. Photography: Igor Luther. Editing: Halina Prugar-Ketting. Music: Michel LeGrand. Produced by Arthur Brauner for CCC Filmkunst (West Berlin)/Gaumont/TF 1 Films Production (Paris). Distributed by Triumph Films. 1983.**

Stories about World War II are nothing new in the repertoire of Andrzj Wajda. Wajda's first four films, all completed during the fifties, dealt with either the war itself *(A Generation, Kanal, Lotna)* or its social and political aftermath *(Ashes and Diamonds)*, and expressed the pathos of memories still fresh. With the completion of *Landscape After Battle* in 1970, we began to see a Wajda looking back from a more distant perspective, his sense of tragedy still strong but tinted with finer subtleties. *A Love in Germany* carries this progression further. With the passage of still more time, we find that Wajda's perspective has softened but not at all dulled. In this film, a German-French coproduction, the foremost Polish director of our era has taken a simple wartime love story and fashioned a piece of cinema that is both beautiful and complex.

We enter the story in 1983, through the viewpoint of Herbert (Otto Sander), a 49-year-old German returning to his childhood home in the province of Baden-Württemberg. Something that happened in the past troubles Herbert, and he is determined to learn the truth about it. He brings his 17-year-old son Klaus (Ben Becker), because he wants him to know about it, too.

Herbert and Klaus bicycle into the little town of Brombach, and soon we flash back to 1941. The story that unfolds is about Herbert's mother, Pauline Kropp (Hanna Schygulla) and her love affair, in violation of Nazi law, with a Polish prisoner-of-war. It is also about Pauline's neighbors, who suspect and disapprove but do not agree on what should be done; about local officials who would prefer to ignore Pauline's crime; and about prisoners of war who speak passionately of freedom and proclaim the indomitability of the Polish spirit but, in their moment of reckoning, turn into mewling crybabies. It is a many-layered story told in a language resonant with irony.

On the top layer, *A Love in Germany* is what its title announces, a drama about great love, about a passion so undeniable that it drives the two lovers to their doom. Pauline's love for Stani (Piotr Lysak) exixts separately from all else in her life. She cannot choose between Stani and her husband Hermann, off fighting the war like other German men, because her passion for the younger Pole transports her beyond the state of mind in which choices can be rationally made. Nor can she deny her love for Stani even when offered the opportunity to save herself by doing so; she chooses, instead, certain imprisonment, disgrace, the loss of her family. On this level, *A Love in Germany* is a twentieth-century *Romeo and Juliet*, a story of a love damned by society.

On another level, it is a story about courage. In the film's first flashback, Karl Wyler (Gerard Desarthe), comes to town in his army uniform for a brief furlough. The local mayor tells him things are fine, the women of Brombach are brave. Yet it is the women in the film who are least courageous; it is they who are most bothered by Pauline's behavior—Frau Melchior, in whose home Stani is billeted;

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Pauline's son in A LOVE IN GERMANY

Elsbeth Schnittgens (Elisabeth Trissenaar), Pauline's best friend, who refuses to condone the affair; and, most of all, Karl's wife Maria (Marie-Christine Barrault), who will eventually expose Pauline's crime because she covets her thriving little produce shop. Their men are curiously unconcerned; they even question the appropriateness of the law that forbids sexual relations across "racial" barriers.

But if the men are less inclined to condemn Pauline, they are no more courageous. The only man who comes close to a courageous deed is *Untersturmführer* Mayer (Armin Mueller-Stahl), the local police officer who finds himself stuck with Pauline's case. Acting out of respect for Pauline's husband, Mayer offers her a chance to save herself by claiming she had been raped by Stani; she denies that. Mayer seeks to establish medical grounds for declaring Stani an "Aryan," which would save them both, but Stani refuses to be Germanized. Despite Mayer's obvious distaste for the job, duty requires him to imprison Pauline and execute Stani, and thus he too shrinks from the opportunity to do something genuinely courageous.

Only Pauline, in her passion, displays courage throughout. Learning that Stani has been injured, she interrupts her departure for a visit with Hermann and rushes in hysterics to Stani's hospital room, where she creates a scene that scandalizes other patients and nurses. She refuses to take the easy way out when Mayer offers it to her. At the end she is jeered and spit upon, but she holds her head upright as she is led through the town square for sentencing.

Hanna Schygulla plays the role of Pauline with an authenticity that is truly stunning. Her performance has captured critical attention in America ever since the picture played at the 1984 New York Film Festival. There is no denying the force of Schygulla's acting, without which the story might be lost in melodrama. But *A Love in Germany* is Andrzej Wajda's film, displaying a command of story, cast, and technique that demonstrates the artistry of a great director.

Wajda uses some techniques that we have seen before from him, such as an understated violence that haunts the edges of the action (as in *Man of Marble* and *Landscape After Battle).* New in this film, however, is a complex system of ironies expressed through characterization, action, dialogue, and color.

"We must be careful," Pauline tells Stani as, in the midst of passion, she reaches into her purse and pulls out a condom. On the road below them, *Untersturmführer* Mayer steps from his jeep to urinate, using the male organ for a purpose different from Stani's action overhead, and comments on the beauty of the landscape; his sidekick Schultze (Ralf Wolter) replies, "Very romantic." Thus is the initial connection made between the two lovers and the man who must eventually administer the punishment for their crime.

At the beginning of Pauline's story, a lyrical atmosphere sets the scene. Brombach in 1941 appears to be a haven, removed from the ugliness that we associate with the Third Reich. It is the springtime of Pauline's love, and flowers are blooming. She and Stani are aware of danger, but they ward it off with condoms.

As Pauline becomes less and less discreet about her affair, the danger grows. The soft colors of spring give way to a complexion of greater realism. We are jolted out of these realistic color tones, however, for the climactic scene in Mayer's headquarters where Pauline is given her chance to deny Stani. Bathed here in autumnal browns, Pauline affirms her love for Stani and insists that she regrets nothing. The color tones immediately sharpen again after

this scene until we witness the inevitable tragedy in the quarry outside town; here, where other Polish prisoners have been sentenced to dig rocks, harsh daylight dulls the visual contrasts as Stani is hanged.

As *Untersturmführer* Mayer, Armin Mueller-Stahl deftly shows us a character with his own complications. We do not expect a Nazi policeman to show compassion, and when this one does, he also displays the anguish of a man whose public station requires him to perform duties he would much rather escape. In this, he mirrors the more generalized anguish of Brombach. Except for Maria, Pauline's neighbors would like to see the whole matter resolve itself without disturbing their lives. The war, though it seems far away, is vexation enough.

When Elsbeth receives news of her fiancé's death at the front, the war comes home. From this point on it becomes more and more difficult to ignore the affair between Pauline and Stani, particularly as Pauline herself now abandons all pretense of caution in Stani's hospital room. By the time Maria Wyler informs on her, she has already exposed herself.

Thematically, Stani's side of the story takes Wajda back into more familiar territory. All of Wajda's earlier films about the war dealt with Poles in their Polish complexity, their mythic heroism and their hopeless dreams. Like those pictures, especially *Kanal, Ashes and Diamonds,* and *Lotna, A Love in Germany* takes a characteristic Wajda jab at Polish romantic mythology. Daniel Olbrychski plays Wiktorczyk, a fellow prisoner-of-war and a friend of Stani. Wiktorczyk, a teacher, a civilized man, agrees to slip the noose around Stani's neck, persuaded by Mayer that "to have a hangman who is a friend is a consolation." Having accepted this horrible bit of logic, however, Wiktorczyk's Polish spirit flags and he breaks down. In the end, he cannot perform his act of "consolation," and Mayer must be the hangman. As for Stani, who has shown much youthful valor all along, he has vowed that in his moment of execution he would shout, "Long live Poland," but alas, he can only whimper "Mama."

One gets the sense that Wajda simply could not resist making this comment about his traditional fixation, what his co-screenwriter and friend Bolesław Michałek has called

Hanna Schygulla as Pauline

"Polishness." Other critics, perhaps reading too much between the lines, have spotted the "Polishness" theme in Wajda's 1982 French-made film *Danton* (see, e.g., Mieczysław Szporer's article in *FQ*, Winter 1983–84). But *A Love in Germany* is not really about "Polishness." In the end, it is not really about Germans, either, although the Germans of Brombach serve nicely as subjects for a story about courage and passion. Rather, it is a *European* film, a film that expresses sentiments widely felt in the Europe of the eighties, a Europe groping for a sense of unity that has been missing since the end of the Holy Roman Empire.

The ultimate meaning of the story becomes clear when the scene flashes forward 42 years to Herbert's factfinding visit. Maria Wyler has his mother's old shop. Maria's daughter, conceived in the midst of Pauline's affair, angrily tells Herbert, "The past must be buried." Other survivors similarly prefer not to remember. Above the old quarry, now overgrown with weeds, the rusted sign warning people to stay out stands as a metaphor of forgetting.

Circulating in the United States at a time when fortieth anniversaries are being commemorated, *A Love in Germany* aptly bespeaks the mood of Europe in the mid-eighties, while we on this side of the Atlantic are drenched by media coverage of Normandy, V-E Day celebrations, presidential visits to Bitburg and Bergen-Belsen, and superficial public

debates about good and evil. Amid all this, Andrzej Wajda has taken us back to the hamlet of Brombach, where the little people in Nazi Germany, everyday folks with everyday emotions and everyday greed and everyday capacities for goodness, shared in the complicity for this century's greatest crimes; where public officials, capable of bungling and shilly-shallying just like public officials everywhere, felt themselves honor-bound to enforce the law even when it meant doing something despicable; and where, today, the need to remember the past as it really was is a paramount human necessity.

—DAVID PAUL

PEDRO AND THE CAPTAIN

Directed by Juan E. Garcia. Produced by Pedro Torres Castilla and Juan E. Garcia. Screenplay by Maripi Saenz de la Calzada. Story by Mario Benedetti, based on his play "Pedro y el capitán." Photography: Cuco Villarias. Editor: Gerda Gatterer. Music: Gerardo Batiz, Rene Lemus, Juan Carlos Novelo, and Chuco Mendoza. Cine Images, SA (Mexico). Distributed in the US by Azteca Films, Los Angeles.

Institutionalized torture—technologically and methodologically sophisticated—as a means of both "corrective" and "preventive" social control, has been routine practice for a number of Latin American governments over the past decade. Such procedures produce psychological phenomena which can only be acknowledged, analyzed and treated once the systematic use of torture and terror has been obliterated. Once civilian rule is successfully restored, military officials who countenanced or administered torture face exposure, trial, possible punishment. Those who suffered at their hands and survived, and those who lost family and friends to their brutality, must now reckon with psychic damage more devastating and indelible than physical scars. Physicians and psychiatrists face the unenviable task of identifying, diagnosing and treating these unspeakable traumas as entire nations ask themselves, how could this have happened here?

Pedro and the Captain is one of a number of films and literary works which have tried to come to grips with the causes and motivations of this systematic destruction of human beings. What interests the director of this new Mexican release, in his feature debut, is not the graphic detail of physical abuse but the psychological dimensions of one human being's need to subdue another, and that other human being's unrelenting refusal to be subdued. Language, and the withholding of language, are the weapons deployed by both captor and captive. For the prisoner, death is the only way out. Pedro realizes that he must become the midwife of his own demise. Yet the wielder of power in this hopelessly uneven match does not taste victory. The resolve of the dominated undoes the dominator, who in supplicating his intransigent prey must face the truth of his own entrapment.

Based on a play of the same name by the exiled Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti, *Pedro and the Captain* enjoyed a long run in Mexico City as performed by members of the exiled Teatro Galpon, Uruguay's most famous theatrical company. Though he draws his cast from these talented performers, Garcia's film rises above conventional approaches to filmed theater.

The opening sequence is a tour de force—a single shot that lasts through the entire first reel. Pedro (Humboldt Ribeiro) does not speak during this sequence; his features remain concealed under a hood and he barely moves throughout the duration of the shot. The Captain (Ruben Yanez), in contrast, stalks freely about his office as he lays siege to the prisoner in a roller-coaster soliloquy of alternately ingratiating and threatening locutions, his harsh, eagle-like features revealing a remarkable plasticity.

This contrast between stasis and motion, speech and silence, power and powerlessness is both underlined and transcended by the fluid dollying of a camera which moves gracefully and deliberately around the set, tracking in and out on both performers without ever disrupting the pace of the Captain's delivery or the silent currents of fear and animosity which run from Pedro toward his captor. It is as if the threatrical spectator had been freed from the confines of his/her seat and invited up onto the stage to wander among the actors as they perform. During the first several minutes, the filmmaker refuses editing, as if to establish the legitimacy of the cinematic medium as mediator of the theatrical one. It is obvious from this first reel that Garcia is fully capable of shooting the entire play as a "single take." Once he has established this fact, he can choose

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PEDRO AND THE CAPTAIN

not to do so, and his choice will enhance rather than detract from his audience's experience of a work of art that becomes cinematic without losing its appeal or its impact as theater.

The set is almost innocent in its ordinariness—a desk, a file cabinet, a sink with mirror, a miscellany of chairs, a broom resting in a corner—but the dark walls, the color of a bruise, strike a sinister note. Four encounters in this confined space provide the basic narrative structure. Almost no attempt is made to recreate the experience of physical brutality; only its aftermath is illustrated in Pedro's increasingly encrusted face and in his increasingly halting speech. There are numerous verbal references to the tortures inflicted upon him by the *muchachos electricos* ("electric boys") in the interludes between his "interviews" with the Captain, but the only physical violence he endures on camera is a single swift kick from his interrogator and periodic dousings by anonymous bearers of pails of fetid water.

On the rare occasions where it leaves the Captain's office, the camera briefly transports the viewer into three other realms. First, and only once, we follow the Captain as he ascends a magisterial stairway—its gleaming baroque opulence exaggerated by the peripheral distortions of a wide-angle lens. Seated in plush airchairs in a glittering, high-ceilinged salon, he and the General sip cocktails and joke raucously about the *muchachos electricos.*

A brusque cut to pounding surf along a rocky shoreline transports us to another, subjective realm. What seems like an inconsistent poeticization of the image, an inappropriate change in tone, is immediately followed by a cut to the third kind of "external" space, Pedro's cell. The disconcerting gulf between these last two shots is immediately bridged. Pedro, slumped in a corner, is illuminated by a swash of light cast across his inert body from a door whose creaking hinges are heard off screen. The glimpse of a pail in motion is followed by the sound and sight of water dousing his wooden form into convulsive consciousness. Subjective and objective realms are joined by this liquid linkage. This intrusion is shockingly arbitrary, like a fleeting memory which surfaces unbidden. Subsequent images—Pedro's spinning cell, his comrades who approach him with their features fogged beyond recognition—are other examples of uniquely subjective space. Cutaways to the

seashore, symbolic embodiment of expansiveness, constancy and endless transformation, later include Pedro and his wife Amanda (Silvia Garcia) seated in the surf or clasping hands against a backdrop of waves.

Pedro and the Captain does not engulf the viewer in relentless realism. The provocation here is not to the viscera but to the intellect. The drama defines itself in moral rather than narrowly political terms. The poeticization of the cutaways, the extraordinary mastery of the performances, the richness of the script and the fact that it is, above all, a drama of language, a war of wills through a war of words, all make this a most compelling and constructive meditation on the psychodynamics of domination.

—JULIANNE BURTON

STANDARD GAUGE

By Morgan Fisher. 16mm, color, 35 min. Available from 1306-C Princeton Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404.

Of this country's major experimental or "avant-garde" film-makers, Morgan Fisher is probably the least known to the nonspecialist public. He has had no highly visible critic/apologist (such as P. Adams Sitney or Annette Michelson) to plead his case. He has made a relatively small number of short films, each based on a deliberately restricted, sharply defined idea. Within the "avant-garde" community, Fisher has a small group of loyal admirers. *Standard Gauge* will probably change this situation. It is a breakthrough for Fisher in at least two senses: as a more immediately appealing film for the uninitiated spectator, compared to his previous work, and as a broadening and personalizing of his artistic explorations. The film had its premiere last winter at New York's Collective for Living Cinema and is now on tour with a program of works from this year's Whitney Museum Biennial.

Fisher has always made what could best be called minimalist performance films, in which the performance at issue generally concerns the interaction of people and machines. *Projection Instructions* (1976), perhaps the most literal embodiment of this theme, is a performance piece for the film's projectionist, who must obey a sequence of instructions such as "Turn Lamp Off" and "Turn Sound Up" from synchronized title cards and spoken instructions. Every showing of the film, needless to say, is different (not to mention terrifying to the projectionist). *Production Stills* (1970) involves a group of performers who have the task of taking a set of Polaroid stills of themselves making the film. All the viewer sees, however, are the pictures they produce, along with bits of hands that come into the frame to position them in front of the camera. The sound track consists of the team's comments on their work. While we see one image, we hear another being produced and discussed. Slowly, by seeing stills of the camera, the sound recordist, and so on, the viewer pieces together an understanding of the mise en scène of the performance, itself never seen directly.

In such films, Fisher might be said to have taken the idea of "metacinema" just about as far as it can go. The ideas behind these works are generally simple, their actualizations strikingly complex or perverse (as, for example, the logical but disconcerting non-coincidence of sound and image in *Production Stills*). A recurring topic is the encounter between the mechanical and the organic. The hesitations and periodic blunders of the human performers emerge with Cagean clarity against the precision and neutrality of the mechanism; these "mistakes" are not felt as imperfections, however, but as almost voluptuous intrusions of the aleatory. This line of work seems to have reached a sort of culmination in *Cue Rolls* (1974), which is so convoluted (in conception, at least) as to defy simple description. It is also diabolically funny, as is much of the artist's work.

Standard Gauge both continues and departs from Fisher's earlier films. Most obviously, it is much longer: 35 minutes as opposed to 4 to 11 minutes. Fisher likes arbitrary constraints imposed by the apparatus. Most of his early films are carefully crafted to fit into standard lengths of film stock: 200 feet *(Cue Rolls)*, 400 feet *(Production Stills)*, etc.) The performance in *Standard Gauge* has been timed to fill exactly 1000 feet of film, the longest single take normally possible with 16mm equipment. To this is added just enough introductory material on a rolling "crawl" to make a total of 35 minutes of film about: 35 millimeter film. In subject matter, the new work continues Fisher's interest in metacinema, but the new work is both

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more loosely structured and more personal. "The first time I ever handled 35 millimeter motion picture film was in the summer of 1964," the film-maker's voice informs us after the introductory crawl. He describes the circumstances of this experience and recalls how moved he was. "In the time since then I've worked around 35 millimeter on and off. I've never seen a piece of 35 that I didn't want to pick up and look at; sometimes I've been free to keep pieces that I've come across." And so, simply and directly, is set up the discursive format that will follow. The unseen film-maker inserts pieces of 35mm film from his collection into a viewing apparatus, showing and commenting on individual frames, sometimes passing an entire strip by as he pulls it through.

It is a cliché in the criticism of avant-garde film that this sort of film typically pays attention to the "materiality" of the cinema medium, but few films can claim to pay such literal and sustained attention to it as does *Standard Gauge*. Fisher wants us to see what we don't normally see in ordinary film viewing. He is particularly fond of the bits of film we never see at all, such as leader, test shots, and titles for the convenience of film editors. One of the most remarkable moments of the film is a sustained monologue over a bit of celluloid that insists, in huge letters, "SCENE MISSING."

These pieces of film seem to me to be interesting enough to fully justify both Fisher's fascination with them and their central position in *Standard Gauge*. Most of his found frames are as beautiful as any representational film images could possibly be. A recurrent theme is the graphic complexity unintentionally created by repeated duplication of standard materials such as leaders. Some of the shapes have become so stylized that it is difficult to make them out; they have acquired strange textures, and occasional extra appendages that change their form and possible meaning. The pieces of film are arranged so as to form a rough chronology of Fisher's involvement with them, though there are important digressions. One of the most interesting of these is a series of those mysterious images of women's faces that are used to calibrate film processing equipment. Fisher comments: "In a literal sense these women are just as much a part of the film as those images that are intended to be presented to our view.

Morgan Fisher's STANDARD GAUGE

yet their presence is invariably suppressed as being an intrusion. It is the people working behind the scenes, such as laboratory technicians, those people who dedicate their lives to rendering appearance perfect, who know these women best."

Here, as elsewhere in *Standard Gauge*, it is evident that Fisher's love of and interest in the materiality of the film medium is not cut off from the actual circumstances of production of the materials: it is not a fetish. He is aware, and wants us to be aware, that this wonderful machinery and the marvelous objects it produces operate in a political, ideological, and economic context. A lengthy section on Technicolor, occasioned by the story of the film-maker's saving some footage from a mass destruction of file copies at the Los Angeles Technicolor labs, becomes, inevitably, a commentary on the function of capital investment in film processing. Fisher ends this section with a quote from a memorial announcement in *The Hollywood Reporter* that was signed "The Friends of IB." While this elegy is read, we are show a (deliberately unremarkable) piece of imbibation ("IB") matrix from the process. The result is a simple and profoundly moving tribute to the now defunct color system, but it is also an object lesson in what factors ultimately determine the uses of the cinematic apparatus.

Fisher's involvement with 35mm film has sometimes been as offbeat as the pieces of film in his collection. A section of *Standard Gauge* deals with his experiences as second editor on the Roger Corman production *The Student Nurses*, and later as editor of and bit player in

something called *Messiah of Evil*. The latter film provides us with the only images of the artist in *Standard Gauge*, anamorphically compressed, in the role of an apparently demented art gallery assistant. These sequences freely combine autobiographical reflection with political commentary on the film production process. Another sequence involves a short stint Fisher put in doing research in a stock footage library for a film (never made) on violent deaths. Part of the story has him running across the shot of an execution used by Bruce Conner in the classic *A Movie*. Fisher tells us who was executed and why, and also why, when he went back to the library some years later to get his own copy of the shot, he emerged instead with two possibly original nitrate images of the dirigible *Hindenburg*.

Bruce Conner is not the only film-maker involved directly or obliquely in *Standard Gauge*. Others include Edgar G. Ulmer, Jean-Luc Godard, American International Pictures, and Hollis Frampton. *Standard Gauge* is a work of great ambition and incredible richness: starting from a small group of bits of film footage, it talks about itself and about Fisher's other work. It concerns art, economics, technology, and the meaning of personal experience in relation to these areas. It is a major work of avant-garde cinema, and deserves a place in that canon alongside classics such as Frampton's *Zorns Lemma* and Snow's *Wavelength*. Anyone interested in the art of the film should go see it. —ALAN WILLIAMS

SO IS THIS

By Michael Snow. Sources: Canyon Cinema Coop, Film-Makers Coop.

Few film-makers have had as large an impact on the recent avant-garde film scene as Canadian Michael Snow, whose *Wavelength* is probably the most frequently discussed "structural" film. Snow has regularly exposed the interference which is generated when a given medium attempts to represent reality, and/or when various media intersect. In *Wavelength* we are simultaneously aware of what we are seeing (documentary imagery of a loft, and through the windows, Canal Street, New York City; fictional imagery of a death and its discovery) and at how the continually changing film stocks, filters, and lighting, and the continuously shortening zoom distance to the windows at the other end of the loft affect what we see. In *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* we watch a film which presents a series of slides of some of Snow's early paintings: we "see" the paintings *and* the distortions of them created by the various steps the imagery has passed through. Snow has explored elements of the literary experience in several of his works: *"Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen* includes a long, rolling credit sequence that plays with text in amusing ways; his *Cover to Cover* (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/NYU Press, 1975) plays with the act of turning the consecutive pages of a book . . . But until *So Is This* Snow had not made the process of reading printed texts a central dimension of a film.

In *So Is This* Snow interfaces what he sees as essential elements of reading texts and experiencing films. Individual words are presented silently, one at a time, for durations varying from a single frame (used for the "subliminal" inclusion of "tits," "ass," "cock," and "cunt" to test the Ontario censors) to nearly a minute. Each word is presented in the same basic composition—centered, with symmetrical margins—but since long words require a smaller type size to fit into the composition of the frame, the words continually vary in size. While the letters of the words are normally white, in some instances Snow varies their color. During a "flashback" passage near the end, for example the words look fittingly faded. The background on which we see the words varies, too: sometimes it's black, sometimes green. And there are other color variations as well, some of which are clearly related to the content of a particular passage while others are not. The most noticable use of color in the film occurs during a passage when Snow decides to review events at different speeds in order to "satisfy" a wider variety of viewer/readers: for nearly four minutes the coloring of words and background change continually and dramatically, sometimes creating a flicker effect, and at other times, moments of considerable visual beauty. One final color factor is the end-of-roll flares which periodically punctuate the film.

Because the act of reading text has such primacy for us—as Hollis Frampton once

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By Michael Snow. Sources: Canyon Cinema Coop, Film-Makers Coop.

Few film-makers have had as large an impact on the recent avant-garde film scene as Canadian Michael Snow, whose *Wavelength* is probably the most frequently discussed "structural" film. Snow has regularly exposed the interference which is generated when a given medium attempts to represent reality, and/or when various media intersect. In *Wavelength* we are simultaneously aware of what we are seeing (documentary imagery of a loft, and through the windows, Canal Street, New York City; fictional imagery of a death and its discovery) and at how the continually changing film stocks, filters, and lighting, and the continuously shortening zoom distance to the windows at the other end of the loft affect what we see. In *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film* we watch a film which presents a series of slides of some of Snow's early paintings: we "see" the paintings *and* the distortions of them created by the various steps the imagery has passed through. Snow has explored elements of the literary experience in several of his works: *"Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen* includes a long, rolling credit sequence that plays with text in amusing ways; his *Cover to Cover* (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/NYU Press, 1975) plays with the act of turning the consecutive pages of a book . . . But until *So Is This* Snow had not made the process of reading printed texts a central dimension of a film.

In *So Is This* Snow interfaces what he sees as essential elements of reading texts and experiencing films. Individual words are presented silently, one at a time, for durations varying from a single frame (used for the "subliminal" inclusion of "tits," "ass," "cock," and "cunt" to test the Ontario censors) to nearly a minute. Each word is presented in the same basic composition—centered, with symmetrical margins—but since long words require a smaller type size to fit into the composition of the frame, the words continually vary in size. While the letters of the words are normally white, in some instances Snow varies their color. During a "flashback" passage near the end, for example the words look fittingly faded. The background on which we see the words varies, too: sometimes it's black, sometimes green. And there are other color variations as well, some of which are clearly related to the content of a particular passage while others are not. The most noticable use of color in the film occurs during a passage when Snow decides to review events at different speeds in order to "satisfy" a wider variety of viewer/readers: for nearly four minutes the coloring of words and background change continually and dramatically, sometimes creating a flicker effect, and at other times, moments of considerable visual beauty. One final color factor is the end-of-roll flares which periodically punctuate the film.

Because the act of reading text has such primacy for us—as Hollis Frampton once

remarked, "Once one can read, one can't not read"—there's a tendency for the viewer to try to understand/respond to the text despite the fact that Snow's presentation of it keeps getting in the way of an easy, comfortable reading experience. This need to read is confirmed by Snow's continual use of devices that requre the reader's close attention. The text includes a variety of puns and other forms of word-play: "This was handwritten then it was typeset then filmed and now it's light reading. . . . This is a shot in the dark . . . a screen in the night. . . ." Much of the punning centers on the film's title. Throughout the text, Snow maintains that "This is the title of this film. . . ." We think of the title as "This," and yet the actual title is "So Is This," which can be read to mean "This is the way 'This' is" and/or to mean "So Is This" is *also* the title of "This." Of course, "title" itself has a double meaning: we may wonder what exactly is the title of "This," but, clearly, all the words we read are presented as titles in another sense. At times this sort of word play grows extremely complex: "In 1979 Drew Morey made a film titled This is the title of my film. Since this is not his film and the 'This' in his title cannot possibly refer to this, his title is not the title of this film and hence the author (Michael Snow) of this film decided to retain this title and to include the foregoing reference to this issue in this film." Since words are always presented individually, the viewer/reader must maintain a very tight grip on Snow's textual progression.

Because of the viewer/reader's compulsion to find out where the sentences are going, to find out their narrative content, Snow is able to create a good deal of tension by working to frustrate the compulsion. For one thing, since we read in phrases, not in single words, Snow's one-word-at-a-time procedure forces the brain to develop a delay system: we see the words and hold onto them waiting for a grammatical termination so that we can understand what this past sentence means and how it fits into the context of previous sentences. Sometimes these waits are substantial: one film-sentence begins, "one of the interests of this system is that each word can be held on the screen for a specific length"—the word "length" stays on the screen for 57 1/2 seconds and (finally!) is followed by "of time." The speed of Snow's delivery is continually changing, and, often, the rates chosen for presenting passages of text have no direct correspondence to the content of these passages.

The tension created by Snow's control of the text's duration on the screen is exacerbated by the continually changing graphic dimensions of successive words. In normal print, the size of the letterforms in a text remains constant and "invisible" once the process of reading is underway. The only exceptions to this usually occur when a writer is using an alteration in the letterforms as an emphasis to the content: "I thought it STUNK." The typeface in *So Is This* remains constant throughout the film, but, in many cases, Snow's compositional decisions make normal apprehension very difficult: prepositions, conjunctions, and articles become the most powerful, visible words, and instead of facilitating the flow of sentences, they often tend to keep us off balance. Even the use of color plays a part here. Generally, the tone of the background and of the individual words remains constant for a while, but, as often as not, when the colors do shift, the changes have no particular relevance to the content of the text we are reading at the time. In fact, when elaborate flares become visible a third of the way into the film, one tends to be distracted from the text altogether. Often, Snow further complicates the issue by lying. Very early we learn, "This film will be about 2 hours long"—actually it's only 49 minutes. Near the end Snow introduces "ten solo words," only to follow this introduction with 24 nouns and adjectives. In three instances the film "flashes back" to review previous information, but in every instance the timing of the words is different, so that while, on one hand, we see that we're reviewing words and sentences we've read before, we also realize that the differences in timing make our perceptions of the words different: the flashbacks review *and* distort. By the end of the film many viewers are so tired of contending with the text that even Snow's assurance that "you will feel better when it is over" barely gets a chuckle. In fact, the text's tendency toward over-genial cuteness becomes annoying (my guess is that this is conscious on Snow's part) long before the film is over—most of us have very limited tolerance for punsters.

One of the results of setting up a visual/temporal filmic system to frustrate the viewer-as-reader's expectations is a critique of certain of

the semiological assumptions which have been providing critics with so much stimulation in recent years. Near the beginning of *So Is This,* the text remarks: "This, as they say, is the signifier." And, even though the text recognizes later that "some of the more cultivated members of the audience may regret the lack of in-depth semiological analysis in this film and note that the vocabulary used is quite basic," in effect the film dramatizes issues that analysis could only hope to describe. The most significant of these issues is probably the relation of narrative and film. If I understand it, recent film theory has reacted to and helped to produce a reaffirmation of the importance of narrative in both industry and independent film, by convincingly arguing that narrativity—in writing, in film— is the inevitable extension of language and is, as a result, as fundamental to cinema as language is to homo sapiens: the connection is so intrinsic, in fact, that film can be fruitfully exposed/decoded through the use of linguistic principles. Snow has always been aware of the narrative dimension of film: as formal as *Wavelength* and ←→ seem, for example, their development-to-climax-and-denouement structures are quite conventional. But, as *So Is This* demonstrates, film is as non-narrative as it is narrative. By controlling graphic composition and temporal pace the way he does, Snow shows that film's *essential* means (mise-en-scène/editing/the theater space . . .) can be used to impede linguistic directionality—and its elaboration into conventional narrative coherence. Certainly in conventional commercial films the combination of shots to make sequences which combine to form stories is analogous to the combination of words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs, chapters, essays/tales. But by literalizing this connection, *So Is This* reveals its complexities and limitations.

Even if we see *So Is This* as a narrative, we're forced to realize that the nature of the narrative experience provided is, in crucial ways, fundamentally different from the normal experience of literary narrative. Probably the most obvious dimension of this is suggested by the comment, "The decision has been made to concentrate on the disctinctive capacity of film to structure time. . . ." We control our own access to literary narrative: we decide how long to read at a sitting, and our training and interest determines the reading pace we choose. A film's duration and pace, on the other hand, is predetermined by the film-maker, and our access to it is controlled by the vagaries of distribution. Further, literary narrative is usually a private experience: even if millions read a novel, they all read it alone. Film is almost always experienced as a public phenomenon (except, perhaps, by film critics who usually have the same sort of private, controlled access to film as they have to literary texts), a fact which Snow continually reminds viewers/readers of. Early in *So Is This*, for example, the rhythm of the text changes to dramatize a "Warning": "This film may be especially unsatisfying for those who dislike having others read over their shoulders."

As is true in much of Snow's work, *So Is This* provides a system within which Snow and the viewer can think about the multitude of relationships which can be and have been developed between the experiences of reading written texts and seeing films. During a passage when *So Is This* discusses the Ontario Board of Censor's recent incursion into the flow of filmic communication, the text identifies *So Is This* as an "Experimental Film." This term, rather than the term "avant-garde" or "independent," gets to the heart of what Snow is doing; it places the film in a film tradition we can trace back to Muybridge. Muybridge set up a systemized process and a rigorous set of vertical and horizontal coordinates against which he could record and, subsequently, measure and study human motion. Snow's rigorous one-word-at-a-time procedure and his limiting of compositional possibilities provides a spatial/temporal grid against which, or within which, *So Is This* can reveal some of the many dimensions of the potential of film and written text to collaborate with, and distract, each other, and the complex processes of contemporary human perception and communication. There's always been a tendency to see Snow's work (and much of the work of related experimental film-makers like Ernie Gehr and J.J. Murphy) as limited by its being only about itself—a kind of filmic version of art for art's sake. But the references of *So Is This* are, in fact, quite broad. Even when the film denies that a given area of concern is relevant, the denial is often multi-sided. Near the end we

read, "Just think of this as entertainment. It's not at all going to be such heavy going. . . . There'll be not one word about El Salvador, no mention of Trudeau and no political commitment whatsoever. So relax and enjoy yourself"—a passage which is full of irony and paradox. Despite what the text says, there is obviously at least one word about El Salvador (if we think of the two-word name as a single entity) and a mention of Trudeau. Further, Snow's early confrontation of the Ontario Board of Censors and his contention that he "will not allow a word of this to be removed" are obviously political.

Finally, the passage reminds us of one of the absurdities of conventional entertainment filmgoing: the fact that the pretense of being nonpolitical is widely thought to be essential to our enjoying ourselves.

Nearly any adjective one can think of to describe film in general or specific groups of films—"narrative," "formalistic," "political," "entertaining," "serious," "personal," "detached," "experimental," "conventional," "auteurist," "semiological"—can, to some degree, be seen as relevant to *So Is This*. In fact, this all-inclusiveness seems one of the obvious implications of this title.

—SCOTT MACDONALD

ERASERHEAD

Written, directed, and produced by David Lynch, in cooperation with the American Film Institute. Photography: Frederick Elmes and Herbert Cardwell. Music: Peter Ivers. Libra/Corinth Films.

A man lives in a seedy one-room apartment located in a nondescript urban wasteland. One day he gets a call from a girlfriend he hasn't seen in some time. She has given birth to a baby. Her mother insists on marriage. He agrees—or rather doesn't disagree. Unable to cope with the demanding baby, the woman leaves. The man looks after it through an illness. He has a brief sexual encounter with a neighbor. Increasingly insistent visions of a strange woman who exists behind the radiator in the apartment impinge on his claustrophobic world. Finally, he kills the baby—an act which shatters the world and frees him to join his vision-woman in Heaven.

Eraserhead, writer-director David Lynch's first feature, has been baffling and disturbing audiences since its release in 1976. It has become one of the most persistent and successful cult films on the midnight and art-house circuits. Yet, while it shares many characteristics which might be attributed to cult films as a class, it differs in some significant ways.

A common characteristic of many cult films is their air of exhibitionism—the relentless grotesquerie and pseudo-mysticism of *El Topo*; the innocent decadence of *Rocky Horror*; the not-so-innocent decadence of John Waters's outrageous entertainments. These films invite the audience to throw off their inhibitions and join in an assault on generally accepted standards of good taste. The ultimate example of this is the participatory cult which grew up around Jim Sharman's *Rocky Horror*, the complete identification of the audience with the film, the shared knowledge and rituals which brought the audience together in a communal experience, a new and alternative culture.

Yet *Eraserhead*, while it dwells on shocking, even perverse images, seems in-turned, obsessively introspective. It provides an auditory and visual assault which isolates each viewer. The experience becomes intensely personal, unshared. Lynch achieves this by relentlessly applying alienating devices. Foremost among these is the setting of the film in a bleak world not recognizable as our own. The action which takes place there offers no narrative with an externally meaningful coherence. The simple "story" of Henry Spencer's forced marriage to Mary X is utterly banal—yet it is couched in a collection of bizarre, seemingly meaningless images and inconclusive scenes which shatter the story's familiarity and make it frighteningly strange.

Exhibiting an artistry and technical skill almost unique in low-budget filmmaking—*Eraserhead* is shot in beautifully atmospheric black-and-white, enhanced with a remarkably intricate, expressionistic sound track—Lynch has structured the film in a series of almost circular movements, taking the viewer on detours which seem to lead back to our starting point—but not quite. Early in the film, Henry stares at the radiator in his room. A menacingly slow tracking shot moves along the base of the radiator, accompanied by a low, threatening hum and a harsh hissing of steam; sound and

read, "Just think of this as entertainment. It's not at all going to be such heavy going. . . . There'll be not one word about El Salvador, no mention of Trudeau and no political commitment whatsoever. So relax and enjoy yourself"—a passage which is full of irony and paradox. Despite what the text says, there is obviously at least one word about El Salvador (if we think of the two-word name as a single entity) and a mention of Trudeau. Further, Snow's early confrontation of the Ontario Board of Censors and his contention that he "will not allow a word of this to be removed" are obviously political.

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image attain an intensity which warns of some imminent event. But nothing happens. Yet later the radiator becomes increasingly prominent as the location of Henry's vision of Heaven. Expectation is fulfilled, but in an unexpected way and displaced in time.

Later, after Mary has walked out, exhausted by the baby's demands, Henry wakes in the night to find her shivering feverishly beside him. He stares at the wall and the camera passes into it; the wall becomes an alien landscape where a worm-like creature rises up to swallow the camera. We emerge from darkness to look back out of the wall at Henry. But Mary is no longer there.

Henry's neighbor, having locked herself out, invites herself into Henry's apartment. They embrace in a bed which is transformed into a pool of milky fluid into which the couple submerge. Henry now enters his Heaven for the first time and approaches the deformed woman who inhabits it. His head abruptly explodes from his shoulders and sinks into a pool of blood, emerging into daylight where a small boy grabs it and runs. The boy sells the head to a pencil factory where it is found to be made entirely of rubber. From here we find ourselves suddenly returned to Henry's apartment where he lies alone, no sign of the neighbor.

In effect this is a kind of cinematic sleight-of-hand. Lynch diverts our attention and then alters a detail of the scene. But the distraction is far out of proportion with the slight change that he makes. What then are these detours? Simply strange, meaningless intrusions into the film's world? But here either everything is real, or nothing is. We can discern no degrees of reality because there is no baseline to which we can point as *rational*. There can be no distinction between what really happens and what someone thinks is happening because here thought is instantaneously manifest as event. We find ourselves in *Eraserhead* in a kind of psychological quicksand, unable to find the correct footing, emotional or intellectual, from which to view the events we see. In fact, it seems that very little actually does happen in the film, although something momentous is always *about* to happen. Yet the cues we are given by the characters themselves indicate that this world is "normal."

This gives the film a kind of humor like that of Beckett and other twentieth-century absurdists, a humor arising from people behaving as if meaning exists in a meaningless world. Henry responds to his child as any doting father might—yet it is a strange reptilian thing, armless, legless, a head attached by a thin neck to a shapeless, bandage-wrapped body—not a human mutant but a perfectly formed something else.

The actions and responses of the characters during Henry's visit to the X's exhibit an almost complete incongruity in each character's behavior—a breakdown or even a complete absence of communication between one mind and another which is nonetheless accepted by the characters as communication. Mrs. X asks Henry, "What do you do?" to which he replies disingenuously, "Oh, I'm on vacation." Mary has a seizure which her unconcerned mother treats by brushing Mary's hair. Henry is asked to carve a chicken which is only the size of a fist; when he tries to comply the bird twitches to life and spews out an oily liquid. And so it goes on—nothing seems to fit.

At its most accessible level, the film seems to be a strange domestic comedy in which the little annoyances of daily life are blown up to monstrous proportions, with poor bemused Henry stumbling through it all, trying his damnedest to appear inconspicuously normal in situations where he is not certain just what "normal" is.

But this humor is not *funny*, because it is wedded to dark, bleak imagery, an almost obsessive interest in biological matters—the textures of internal organs, physical deformity. This biological concern and the bleak, post-industrial landscape in which the film is set are reminiscent of the paintings of the Swiss surrealist H. R. Giger (who, not surprisingly, has called *Eraserhead* "one of the greatest films I have ever seen"). Giger's paintings depict people trapped in mechanical complexes, often being absorbed into the machinery; creatures half-organic, half-mechanical; landscapes of glistening flesh; decaying biological matter.

This parallel offers a means of deciphering Lynch's seemingly impenetrable film. Its coherence is not the external one of narrative form, but the internal one of dream images which may represent any number of things simultaneously with no single meaning negating any of the others. It seems that Lynch has managed to capture the processes of dream

David Lynch's ERASERHEAD

consciousness with remarkable precision. *Eraserhead* is not simply a fantasy related to us and labelled dream; it is the dream experience itself.

But whose dream? The film itself presents us with no one who stands outside the events of the dream. Henry, at the center, is not the dreamer but rather the dreamer's dream identity (it is very much a male dream). Perhaps it is this absence of the dreamer which makes the film so immediate and so disturbing: the viewer becomes the dreamer.

Looked at in this way, the film's meanings begin to emerge clearly. *Eraserhead* is about corruption—the corruption of the natural world and of man as a part of that world. At the root of this corruption *is* man: the human mind, or intellect, or consciousness—that part of man which causes him to perceive himself as apart from the rest of nature, a separateness which causes him to believe that he is free to interfere with and alter nature in any way he desires, with impunity. In the film, the consequences of this meddling well up in vivid nightmare terms. The world of *Eraserhead* is a dead one, bleak and sterile. Man's interference has made it actively hostile to life, and this process has rebounded on him in the form of a perversion of the most basic of life's forces: sex. The symbolic progress of the film reveals an ever-deepening fear of sex (as the agency by which life perpetuates itself), leading ultimately to a disgust which can only be remedied by a complete escape from it—into death.

The physical world depicted in *Eraserhead* offers virtually no images of life. From the very start, we see only a bleak, grimy urban wasteland; concrete expanses, tenements in a narrow street, relieved only occasionally by open space—treeless waste ground. These open spaces are either mere expanses of mud or wire-enclosed compounds containing a litter of technological debris. There are no bird sounds, just the occasional metallic rattle of some idle device off in the shadows. Just once dogs are heard to bark, an angry offscreen outburst from which Henry ducks away nervously. The only animals actually shown are a bitch and her

pups in the X's house; the sound accompanying the pups' suckling seems wrong, like the squealing of rats.

The "ornaments" in Henry's dingy room are themselves dead: a mound of dried grass on top of the dresser, a mat of the same beneath the radiator, and on the bedside table a heap of dirt from which protrudes a dry, leafless twig. Above this hangs a picture of a mushroom cloud—the ultimate symbol of death.

Even when we are shown a garden (in front of the X's house), it is as bleak as the rest of this world: dark and shadowy, with a high wire fence pressing in at the side through which murky, unwholesome steam drifts from railway yards, it contains only dead, withered flowers and shrubs.

The scene which takes place inside this house presents the film's themes in miniature. Far from being a cozy family home, it offers little comfort, no haven from the grim world outside. Situated right beside the tracks, it gets the full benefit of the filth, noise and vibration of passing trains. The interior is cluttered with clumsily placed pipes which further shrink the small rooms and get in the way of movement. This is just another aspect of the inefficient, decaying technology of the film's world—seen again and again, in the empty rotting industrial sites, in the barely functioning elevator in Henry's building, in the violently burning-out light bulbs (in the X's house, and later in Henry's room as the world is coming to an explosive end).

When Mary's father, Bill, first enters from the kitchen, he bursts into a sudden diatribe which is quickly drowned out by the roar of a passing train. He says that he has seen the area pass from meadows to the hell-hole it is today. And then adds significantly that, as a plumber, he put most of the pipes in himself, ruining his knees in the process.

Bill offers a further symbol of this corruption: as they sit down to dinner, he asks Henry to do the carving. He explains at length why: some years ago he had an operation on his arm. The doctors told him he would never recover the use of it."But what do they know?" He rubbed it every day and bit by bit he regained movement until now "it's as good as new." Except that there is absolutely no feeling in it; he will not carve because he is afraid he might cut himself. The arm has a semblance of life, but is in reality little more than animated dead matter. (One thinks of the grandmother sitting in the kitchen, a vegetable appendage to the family, moving only when Mrs. X manipulates her lifeless hands to toss the salad.)

The dinner itself is a kind of perversion. It consists of chickens—of a sort. They are only the size of a fist and Bill says, *man-made.* "Damnedest things, but they're new." Man, trying to extend his manipulation into every corner of nature, has produced a parody.

The film's central symbol for that active part of the human mind, responsible for the disruption and perversion of the natural world—and for the unbalanced, faulty technology which has been the agency of that perversion—is the Man in the Planet. This figure, a grotesque mutant, is a barely moving, twitching creature who sits in a ruined, decaying room with control levers in front of him. He is the repulsive inhabitant of man's own mind. By manipulating his levers he initiates the action of the film; he is "in charge" of this world whose motion has become mechanical rather than living. In the film's final moments, it becomes clear that the Planet itself is not even spherical, but distorted, elongated—shaped something like a head, a dark inorganic head. This creature, embodying the force responsible for corrupting the natural world, stands as the film's devil. But he is also a vital part of man. The horror of this nightmare is the horror of man facing the monster in himself, a confrontation which finally leads to an act of self-destruction to end the horror.

Opposing this devil is a second symbolic figure, Henry's "angel," the sexless woman who inhabits his vision of Heaven. The devil's second appearance in the film blocks Henry's attainment of this Heaven. His third and final appearance shows his control lost, the world destroyed and Henry "freed" at last. But before this sequence can be understood, and the nature of the climactic act of self-destruction comprehended, the second aspect of the film's vision of corruption must be examined.

The perverse sexuality which pervades the film is the key to understanding the meaning of *Eraserhead.* To begin at the beginning: the film opens with images of conception and birth. In the beginning there is space, the Planet—and Henry floating in nothingness. The conception is already corrupt; the sperm comes not from the penis, but is rather drawn mechanically

from Henry's mouth (the head) by the Man in the Planet's manipulation of his levers. The head which attempts to reshape the natural world here tries to control the very processes of reproduction. The sperm itself is an over-sized, clumsy parody of the real thing. It drops into a water-filled cavity in the Planet's surface, submerging in a stream of bubbles which fade to darkness.

The birth consists of a vertical rising from this darkness through a circular hole in the ground, moving up into light and open space. We, like Henry, like the as yet unseen child, have passed from a state of nonexistence into the physical world—a world which becomes increasingly claustrophobic and from which Henry longs to escape back into nonexistence.

The grotesque sperm appears twice more in the course of the film. The first time, it helps to define the nature of the place Henry so longs to enter—the stage which exists in the wall behind the radiator. Although the stage's presence is hinted at just after Henry receives the message from Mary that he is expected for dinner, we do not actually see it until Mary and the baby have moved in and Henry's world has been reduced to the size of the dingy little apartment—until he has become totally trapped within this bleak world.

The stage is as seedy as the apartment, but it is lit by a stark white light which banishes shadows. At the center is the deformed blonde woman of Henry's vision; sexless, with a shapeless body and a bland, childish expression, she performs a stiff little Shirley Temple-like dance. As she dances, the sperm-things drop about her. She steps around them daintily with a coy smile until the music stops; she steps on one of the things and it squishes a milky fluid out on to the stage. She does it again . . . and Henry's Heaven is defined. A warm, moist, safe, enclosed place: the womb. But a sterile womb. Its sexless inhabitant and guardian eliminates the intruding sperm, thus guaranteeing that no conception will occur—and so no birth, no entry into the hated outer world.

At its third appearance, the sperm has become actively malignant. Mary has walked out, yet Henry wakes in the night to find her beside him, tightly wrapped in the sheets, shivering with a fever. Henry, a look of worry, even fear, on his face, reaches beneath the covers and begins to pull something out—a sperm, pulled free apparently from Mary's vagina. It is now a parasite, a source of sickness. Henry pulls it, and then several more, out of Mary—reversing the normal course of sex—and hurls them at the wall, killing them.

Not surprisingly, birth itself is presented in a series of progressively more negative images. Initially, in the opening sequence, it is a journey from darkness into light—a vertical ascent. The second birth image follows one of the film's circular diversions, occurring immediately after the scene described above. As Henry stares at the wall where the crushed sperm have left their smears, the small cabinet beside these marks opens and we see a little worm he earlier found in his mailbox. This worm is itself significant, so I will here make a brief detour of my own to deal with it.

As the cabinet doors open, the worm (which, a woman once commented to me, resembles a very young foetus) comes to life and crawls off into darkness, emerging onto a cratered landscape. It slips into one hole, rises from another, repeating the action several times. And each time it reappears, it has grown larger and fatter—like a penis swelling to erection. This awakening of the penis, as it were, leads directly into the scene which follows (involving the neighbor) and to the climactic self-destructive action. The original finding of the worm—in a dark place (the mailbox)—and Henry's furtive concealment of it, represents the first moment of sexual self-discovery. The circular craters which so stimulate it to growth are an obvious female symbol. Finally, the end of the worm opens into a rapidly widening mouth, an image of extreme appetite, also perhaps becoming a symbol of the vagina, which swallows the camera into complete darkness.

We emerge from this in a way which echoes that first birth image; the camera pans slowly until an opening comes into view, through which it travels. Here, however, instead of rising vertically it tracks horizontally, and we emerge not into light and open space but into Henry's cramped, dimly lit room.

The third birth image is more shocking. Henry, having finally reached the stage-Heaven, is decapitated. His head lies in a pool of blood. Abruptly, it plunges down into the liquid, emerging into that apparently different outer world where it is found that Henry's head consists entirely of rubber. Here we have not

ERASERHEAD

only violence, blood, and a *descending* movement—we have a stillbirth; its product is not alive, indeed may not even be organic.

Given all this, it is equally unsurprising that the vagina occurs as another central image. Its first appearance comes during the dinner scene—the opening into the body cavity of the little chicken which comes to life and oozes a thick oily liquid which might be blood. Henry finds the sight distasteful. Yet Mrs. X is aroused by it to the point of sexual climax, after which she frightens Henry by making a sexual advance. There is a complex fear here: of menstruation, of female sexuality, and of its links to reproduction.

Subsequent appearances of the vagina image are less threatening, as should be the case, given Henry's desire to re-enter the womb. It becomes an image of absorption (the craters on the Planet's surface, the mouth of the worm) which culminates in what is perhaps the film's only moment of beauty, as the bed becomes a pool of milky fluid into which Henry and his neighbor sink in an embrace.

It is at this point that Henry first reaches his Heaven. He journeys through the vagina to emerge into the womb. Standing among the crushed sperm, the deformed blonde sings her brief song about Heaven and then reaches out towards Henry. But he is blinded by a fierce light and the Man in the Planet takes her place. Henry backs away and his head explodes from his shoulders, replaced by the baby, its insistent cry more plaintively demanding than ever. Henry has reached his Heaven, but he cannot possess it—because he penetrated to the womb through an act of sex. But here sex (as the means of procreation) is forbidden. Henry is violently expelled in that image of stillbirth.

This brings us to the image which dominates the film, which becomes its center as it becomes the center of Henry's life: the "baby." This inhuman (yet still oddly human) creature, which lies unmoving on the table from its first appearance, somehow seems to be in control. It wears Mary down with its incessant demanding cry, finally driving her away. Yet Henry accepts its presence passively. What is this bizarre reptilian thing? From its shape and its position in the film's structure of symbols, it can be only one thing: the penis (complete with scrotum—the bandage-wrapped sac to which the head is attached by a thin neck). But it is the penis grown out of all proportion; it has become a separate entity, all appetite. Its cry for attention hardly ever stops. It even disturbs the neighbor as she is willingly giving herself to Henry. Mary is driven away by its need, she rejects its demands (and Henry's slightest sexual move) and is, as a punishment, "infected" by its product, the malignant sperm.

After Mary has left, the baby continues its wailing. Henry wants to leave the apartment, the claustrophobic trap of his tiny airless room, but every time he reaches for the door the baby cries out again. Henry turns back to discover it a mass of repulsive blisters. "Oh," says Henry with a mild concern, "you *are* sick." He attempts to treat it, his actions as mild and ineffectual as ever. But perhaps in that moment he has his first glimmer of where his true problem lies. For it is this thing which blocks his access to Heaven. He is ruled by the penis, the source of the dreaded sperm, agent of reproduction, and is thus unworthy. This is the meaning of the decapitation sequence. Control by the penis is complete.

This is reinforced later. After his "return" from Heaven, he cannot stop thinking about the neighbor (sex). He jumps at every sound from the hall. But when he finally does see the woman again, she is about to enter her apartment with another man, one with a disfigured face who is touching her salaciously (sex has lost its glow). Henry stares; she stares back.

And what she sees is the penis-baby rising in place of Henry's head.

Now the film moves into its climax. Why does Henry take up the pair of scissors and cut open the bandages in which the baby is wrapped? His movements are hesitant. Is his interest clinical? An attempt to diagnose his sickness? Is he trying to punish the baby for trapping him and making his life hell? Or is it a deliberate act of self-release? Certainly, the outcome is release of a kind—the kind, in fact, which Henry longs for. The act itself is self-castration: destroy the appetite by destroying the organ. All the poisons flood up out of the dying thing, and its death throes cause chaos. Because, in destroying the penis, Henry also destroys the tool of continuity, the means by which the world (the particular inner world of the dream) is sustained. Without the support of this organ, the world flies apart. The result is death. But of course this is what Henry desired. The nothingness of the sterile womb, Henry's Heaven, is death itself.

How does this all relate to that other theme, of the world corrupted by man's mind? Quite simply, the kind of control involved in man's heavy-handed manipulation of the physical world is unable to harness the forces of life. The attempt (seen in the mechanical act of conception which initiates the action of the film, in the man-made chickens) results in gross parody—and, worse, in a great conflict with those forces which continue to express themselves in their own terms. The horror of sex which is so pervasive in the dream—from Henry's discomfort around women to the grotesquely distorted sexual imagery—arises from the perception that this particular force is beyond the control of man's rational consciousness (the twisted Man in the Planet). Instead of trying to come to terms with it in a way which would acknowledge its rightful place, consciousness fears sex, tries to suppress it; and down in the subconscious, the place of dreams (the realm of the film) it becomes distorted, even more fearsome. Because it is beyond this kind of control, sex is perceived as a monster. And the only way to escape it is to eliminate it entirely. But self-castration not only obliterates sex—in cutting off the links to life's vital forces, it also kills the castrating consciousness. And so, at the very moment of victory, as sex is finally defeated and Henry sinks blissfully unconscious into the arms of his sterile angel, the Man in the Planet pulls desperately at the controls of his disintegrating machine and flies, with his world, into a million fragments.

Eraserhead is, then, a depiction of the self-defeating tensions which result from man's inability to reconcile his intellect with other, equally potent, aspects of his nature. What makes Lynch's achievement so impressive is that he states this entirely through suggestion—and with a good deal of dark, skewed humor—manipulating his symbols with remarkable dexterity in a surreal vehicle which is organic and unified—and frighteningly alive—without ever reducing the message to the level of a tract. An obsessive, haunting work made by a remarkable, original talent, *Eraserhead* is completely *sui generis*. —K. GEORGE GODWIN

Short Notices

This section will mainly aim at giving coverage to experimental or documentary or video works which deserve attention but do not generally get covered in the film columns of widely available publications. However, we will also include some other films which raise issues or embody problems that we think will interest our readers.

Broken Mirrors. Director Marleen Gorris is working the same feminist vein as in *A Question of Silence* (see review in Winter 1983-84 issue), but this time the women are victims instead of killers. The main action takes place in a brothel; a parallel plot follows a mystery man who kidnaps a woman and keeps her in chains, visiting to watch and photograph her, until she dies. In the brothel, Gorris presents the viewer with an unusual worker's eye view, as nearly every sequence begins with the preparations for the arrival of the day's customers. Although there is violence here, too, the main focus is on the women's reactions and interactions. Gorris can obtain large effects with economical means, such as the brief scenes of the women's haggard faces at the end of a busy students' night. Indeed, the whole film is deployed with at least as much precision and control as *A Question of Silence*. But *Broken Mirrors* falters at the crucial point where *Silence* triumphed—the driving home of its feminist message. The meticulous realism of the brothel scenes obscures the metaphorical equation of the prostitutes' cultural-economic-sexual subjection with the kidnapped woman's physical shackles, so that the revelation of the mystery man as a regular Happy House customer appears mainly as a psychological im-

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—WILLIAM JOHNSON

Weirton Steal marks the reappearance of Bob Machover, one of the film-makers responsible for *Troublemakers*. It chronicles the path by which the workers of a specialty steel-making plant avoided closing by going into an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (an increasingly common occurrence when corporate owners decide to dump plants). Weirton was no nickel-and-dime operation, but had 7,000 employees, and the process by which they debated the pros and cons of the ESOP deal is documented in intriguing interview footage. Interspersed interludes of balloon graphics giving contrasting points of view on the process do not, unfortunately, help much to clarify it—though the effects of ESOPs have been much studied, especially by William Whyte and his colleagues at Cornell (generally workers give up money but do not gain significant control). Nonetheless, the film should be useful for showing to anybody contemplating the ESOP route, which will probably mean millions of Americans in the years ahead. (Red Hill Films, 191 East 2nd Street, New York NY 10009.) —E.C.

Books

FRENCH CINEMA
The First Wave, 1915-1929

By Richard Abel. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. $75.00

A monumental work of scholarship on one of the most important *and* neglected areas of film history, Richard Abel's massive study is already clearly destined to occupy a position of deserved pre-eminence in relation to all foreseeable future work done on this seminal period in French cinema. At once a work of critical synthesis and a compendium of information containing much original research, it remains indispensible less for its overall critical argument than for its wealth of data, making it more valuable as a reference source than as a "definitive" history.

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By the time he reaches his Afterword more than five hundred pages later, Abel expresses some doubts about the degree of influence exerted by "a system of representation or spatial-temporal continuity . . . established in the American cinema by the late 1920s" on the French film industry—reflecting one of the many ways in which Noël Burch's influence undergoes a certain amount of testing and modification in the course of the book. But while Abel generally makes substantial use of the findings of other recent scholars in the field—including Bernard Eisenschitz, Jean-André Fiesche, Sandy Flitterman, Stuart Lieb-

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man, Jean Mitry and Alexander Sesonske, among many others—the original framework outlined above remains his principal source of organization throughout, leading at once to the book's greatest strengths and its greatest weaknesses.

In areas where much basic data and raw material are difficult to come by, the researcher/critic/historian has two possible "ideal" routes to follow: to convey the greatest possible amount of information or to construct a unified, coherent argument about the given subject. Ideally, these two aspirations should proceed hand in glove, but for the truly inquiring scholar who is interested in opening up further areas of possible investigation, each ambition is in perpetual danger of either overwhelming or underrating the claims of the other. The writer may decide to minimize incoherence by ruling out information that can't be absorbed by the critical system and/or argument. Or he/she may decide to opt for a multiple approach that favors multiple uses by others and, consequently, yields an impure, inconsistent or perhaps even contradictory argument or system because it regards itself essentially as work-in-progress.

Much of the major work being done in film criticism today can be grouped around the division implied by this distinction. Critics as diverse (or, in some cases, as similar) as David Bordwell, Douglas Gomery, Gilberto Perez, P. Adams Sitney and Kristin Thompson tend to bite off only as much as they can chew; Noël Burch, Teresa De Lauretis, Raymond Durgnat, Manny Farber and Stephen Heath are among those who are valuable precisely because they bite off more than anyone could possibly chew. And despite some appearances to the contrary, it is in this latter category that Richard Abel belongs.

On the positive side, Abel's structure allows him to study in detail various aspects of early French cinema that have usually been factored out of other studies. Production, distribution and exhibition all receive detailed separate chapters in the first section, while the origins of French film criticism, film journals, ciné-clubs and specialized cinemas each get a chapter in the third—conveying a lot of fascinating material about the development of French cinephilia in general which helps to account for what makes it so unique among national film cultures. And the eight chapters of the second section devoted to specific genres in the commercial narrative film—serials, bourgeois melodramas, realist films, "fairy tales, fables, and fantasies," "Arabian Nights and colonial dreams," historical reconstructions, modern studio spectaculars, and comedies—perform an immense act of clarification by contextualizing the bulk of French silent film into recognizable patterns. The final section, devoted to textual studies of over three dozen narrative avant-garde films, partially refers back to these categories while addressing five other categories which are more germane to this area of study: referentiality, narration and representation, syntactical continuity, rhetorical figuring and narrative structure. While these additional categories may tend to make the book as a whole rather lopsided, they do generally serve to implement Abel's larger project: to install these narrative avant-garde films within the larger discourse of French cinema as a whole.

The shortcomings of Abel's approach, which are to some degree self-acknowledged, have already been touched upon by Kristin Thompson in the Paris journal *Iris* (2:2, 1984), and addressed by Abel himself in a response to her review in the subsequent issue (3:1, 1985). These largely center around the overall division made in the book between "commercial" and "avant-garde" and the different critical methods adopted for each category—an approach which inevitably undercuts the fact that most of the narrative avant-garde films studied were "actually produced" (to quote Abel in *Iris*), "more or less, as commercial films and by the major film companies." By the same token, this strategy also tends to downplay some of the transgressive aspects of some of the commercial films. To my mind, the greatest single disappointment in the book is the relative short shrift given to Louis Feuillade's major serials. Despite the fact that Abel recognizes their importance, and devotes more space to them than most other historians of French cinema, they still tend to get a bit lost in the shuffle. Given the unavailability of these works in the US, they tend to be ignored in most survey and history courses, and while Abel's book clearly paves the way for making a lot of unavailable French films legible—in many cases, for the first time—one wishes he had gone further in conveying the richness of such

works as *Les Vampires* and *Tih Minh*.

The problem, of course, is context: Feuillade's serials probably have more relevance to the New Wave than they do to "The First Wave," and Abel is so steeped in the intricacies of the late teens and twenties that the principal concerns of the avant-garde over the past quarter of a century carry relatively little weight in focusing his own interests—apart from the critical methodologies that have developed over the same period. (One might similarly question, in Abel's lengthy analysis of Gance's *Napoléon*—which argues that "there remain several textual levels of incoherence suspended in a deceptive form of coherence" —his total silence on the ideological implications of the renewed interest in the film when it was revived by Brownlow and Coppola.) This makes his work an invaluable act of retrieval, but only indirectly (and, perhaps, inadvertently) a polemic in relation to the non-narrative basis of much contemporary avant-garde work. Considering Peter Gidal's objections to the "recuperation" of *Wavelength* as narrative (by Annette Michelson, among many other critics), one suspects that a similar charge could be made against the efforts of Abel to relate *Ballet Mécanique* and *L'Entrácte* to the narrative avant-garde of the same period. But theoretical purity is obviously less important to Abel than comprehensive inclusiveness in establishing a context, and considering the wealth of what he has to offer as a historian, there are many practical reasons for supporting his somewhat skewed approach. Certainly one can go nowhere else at present to find as much information about the silent films and careers of such figures as Raymond Bernard, Ricciotto Canudo, Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Henri Fescourt, Jacques Feyder, Abel Gance, Jean Grémillon, Dmitri Kirsanoff, Marcel L'Herbier and Henry Rouseel; and even with such relatively familiar figures as Buñuel, Clair, Dreyer and Renoir, Abel often has fresh insights to convey.

Finally, a brief word about the book's status as an expensive, beautiful object. While the cover price places it outside the range of most individual purchasers, one need only put *French Cinema* alongside any of the volumes in G. K. Hall's bibliography series to demonstrate cogently that, in size and quality of production, it is not overpriced. The layout of text and illustrations is skillfully executed for the most part, and the 30-page bibliography is a major resource. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

FILM SOUND: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. $35.00 cloth, $14.50 paper.

Discussion of film sound is invariably bedeviled by the notion that the image is primary and therefore, in any conflict between the two channels, the problem lies with the sound. The freedom and poetry of the late silent film succumbed (as conventional history tells it) to the literalness of the early talkie and could be revived only by using sound with restraint and imagination. Yet it's just as accurate to say that the poetry and freedom of the radio dramas succumbed to the literalness of the early television play and could be revived only by using the *image* with restraint and imagination. Any problems in the mating of sound and image do not arise from either channel alone.

Since *Film Sound* is an anthology of writings from the late twenties to the present, it cannot be faulted for including many of the accepted views that emerged from the upheavals of the early sound-on-film era. In fact, it's good to be reminded that these views were once fresh and justified and could be expressed in lively fashion, as in a 1939 essay by Cavalcanti.

All the same, I wish that co-editor Belton had taken a more skeptical stand in his survey of the technology and aesthetics of film sound. He writes: "Sound achieves authenticity only as a consequence of its submission to tests imposed on it by other senses—primarily by sight. . . . In order to assure an audience that the dialogue and/or sound effects are genuine, the editor must . . . establish synchronization between sound and image. . . . The editor is [then] free to do almost anything with the picture and sound, confident that the audience now trust what they hear, since it corresponds to . . . what they see." Later Belton asserts: "What the sound track seeks to duplicate is the sound of an image, not that of the world." Again, this is a one-sided view of a two-sided situation. After all, the "voice of God" narration, popular in documentaries and also in factually inspired Hollywood dramas of the forties

works as *Les Vampires* and *Tih Minh*.

The problem, of course, is context: Feuillade's serials probably have more relevance to the New Wave than they do to "The First Wave," and Abel is so steeped in the intricacies of the late teens and twenties that the principal concerns of the avant-garde over the past quarter of a century carry relatively little weight in focusing his own interests—apart from the critical methodologies that have developed over the same period. (One might similarly question, in Abel's lengthy analysis of Gance's *Napoléon*—which argues that "there remain several textual levels of incoherence suspended in a deceptive form of coherence" —his total silence on the ideological implications of the renewed interest in the film when it was revived by Brownlow and Coppola.) This makes his work an invaluable act of retrieval, but only indirectly (and, perhaps, inadvertently) a polemic in relation to the non-narrative basis of much contemporary avant-garde work. Considering Peter Gidal's objections to the "recuperation" of *Wavelength* as narrative (by Annette Michelson, among many other critics), one suspects that a similar charge could be made against the efforts of Abel to relate *Ballet Mécanique* and *L'Entrácte* to the narrative avant-garde of the same period. But theoretical purity is obviously less important to Abel than comprehensive inclusiveness in establishing a context, and considering the wealth of what he has to offer as a historian, there are many practical reasons for supporting his somewhat skewed approach. Certainly one can go nowhere else at present to find as much information about the silent films and careers of such figures as Raymond Bernard, Ricciotto Canudo, Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Henri Fescourt, Jacques Feyder, Abel Gance, Jean Grémillon, Dmitri Kirsanoff, Marcel L'Herbier and Henry Rouseel; and even with such relatively familiar figures as Buñuel, Clair, Dreyer and Renoir, Abel often has fresh insights to convey.

Finally, a brief word about the book's status as an expensive, beautiful object. While the cover price places it outside the range of most individual purchasers, one need only put *French Cinema* alongside any of the volumes in G. K. Hall's bibliography series to demonstrate cogently that, in size and quality of production, it is not overpriced. The layout of text and illustrations is skillfully executed for the most part, and the 30-page bibliography is a major resource. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

FILM SOUND: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Discussion of film sound is invariably bedeviled by the notion that the image is primary and therefore, in any conflict between the two channels, the problem lies with the sound. The freedom and poetry of the late silent film succumbed (as conventional history tells it) to the literalness of the early talkie and could be revived only by using sound with restraint and imagination. Yet it's just as accurate to say that the poetry and freedom of the radio dramas succumbed to the literalness of the early television play and could be revived only by using the *image* with restraint and imagination. Any problems in the mating of sound and image do not arise from either channel alone.

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All the same, I wish that co-editor Belton had taken a more skeptical stand in his survey of the technology and aesthetics of film sound. He writes: "Sound achieves authenticity only as a consequence of its submission to tests imposed on it by other senses—primarily by sight. . . . In order to assure an audience that the dialogue and/or sound effects are genuine, the editor must . . . establish synchronization between sound and image. . . . The editor is [then] free to do almost anything with the picture and sound, confident that the audience now trust what they hear, since it corresponds to . . . what they see." Later Belton asserts: "What the sound track seeks to duplicate is the sound of an image, not that of the world." Again, this is a one-sided view of a two-sided situation. After all, the "voice of God" narration, popular in documentaries and also in factually inspired Hollywood dramas of the forties

and fifties, not only establishes itself independently of the image track but also is used to authenticate the images (and other sounds) of the film.

On the other hand, Belton does use quotes when he refers to the "secondary" status of sound, and he also takes issue with the current Marxist assumption that traditional narrative films seek to suppress the gap between the production of sound and the production of the image. In addition, Weis and Belton reduce the usual chorus of warnings against dialogue and in favor of asynchrony by deliberately passing over two aspects of film sound that have enjoyed the most attention: the transition period from silents to talkies and the use of incidental music. To the extent that the acceptance of the image as primary depends on lack of familiarity with the processes of sound recording and reproduction, the editors also redress the balance by including a 40-page "narrative glossary" of sound technology. This is, indeed, so rich in detail that in future editions it might well be expanded with some further clarification for the nontechnical reader.

Since the editors refer to a "surge of interest" in film sound over the past decade, it may seem odd that their section on Modern Theory consists of only four selections (one of them a handful of Bresson's Notes on Cinematography) and runs to little more than 20 pages, as against nine selections and 60 pages for Classical Theory. In fact, modern theory has not yet shaken off the long-established bias against film sound. One of the more perceptive writers on the topic, Noël Burch, is represented in this anthology by Chapter 6 of his *Theory of Film Practice*, which begins: "The fundamental dialectic in film . . . is that contrasting and joining sound with image." Yet Burch managed to write his first five chapters as if there were nothing in film other than the image—an intermittency of interest typical of nearly all writers on film sound.

An anthology, almost by its very nature, can compensate for such flaws and lacunae in its chosen field. Although Classical Theory and Modern Theory together make up one of the major divisions of *Film Sound*, there is no rigid compartmentalization of topics. Theory, technology, methodology, practice and descriptive analysis tend to intermingle thoughout. This is all to the good, establishing sound as a topic of scope and substance rather than a mere strip of squiggles (or iron oxide) on the margin of the image. Moreover, the fact that Burch (like Metz and other writers) is represented by a selection where he focuses on sound, while passages where he ignores it are eliminated, gives his statements a greater impact than in their original context.

Although the main emphasis of the anthology is on the traditional narrative film, Weis and Belton have included references to other film types, most importantly a specially written contribution by Fred Camper on the use of sound and silence by independent filmmakers. This broad perspective enhances the usefulness of the anthology as a base camp for further exploration of the theory and practice of sound.

It is always easy for a reviewer to find fault with the choice of articles and excerpts in an anthology. My main reservation is with the inclusion of four contributions (one of them already a reprint) from the Yale French Studies "Cinema/Sound": granted the importance of this special issue, one of the selections might well have been replaced by an essay less accessible to English-speaking readers.

On the other hand, I am impressed by the choice of studies of individual films and film makers. Perhaps the most valuable of these is Martin Rubin's analysis of Stahl's *Back Street*, which stresses the importance of a sound track that may at first seem to be routinely realistic. Penny Mintz's essay on Welles's use of sound and the excerpt from Weis's own book on Hitchcock are also outstanding. (My only quarrel with the latter is the dismissal, as mainly visual in emphasis, of *Vertigo*, a film whose entire structure can be perceived as depending on an interplay of music, speech and silence; Weis's perceptive analysis of *The Birds* might consequently leave the impression that a sound track is praiseworthy to the extent that it displays unusual techniques.

It should not be necessary to commend a scholarly text for its freedom from typographical and other elementary errors, but nowadays this basic requirement cannot be taken for granted. The only such error I noted in *Film Sound* was already embedded in the selection: the mistranslation of the French word *plan* as "plane" instead of "shot."

In its crafting and in the individual appeal of many of its selections, *Film Sound* is a pleasure to read. In addition, the book's general organization and range of selections present an accurate summary of the development of film sound and attitudes toward it from the late twenties to the eighties. For anyone interested in finding ways out of the present theoretical confusion, *Film Sound* is an excellent place to start. —WILLIAM JOHNSON

AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY
Elia Kazan and American Culture

By Thomas H. Pauly. Phhiladelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

An American Odyssey is an important, comprehensive study that is over-ambitious. As Kazan's Homer, Professor Thomas Pauly tells the intriguing and previously unwritten story of a seminal director who pioneered the genre of social realism in drama and film. On balance, Pauly's work succeeds as an informative account of Kazan's noteworthy odyssey—a journey that includes the production of several American classics *(On the Waterfront, Death of a Salesman, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof),* and the work of exemplary American writers (Tennessee Williams, Thornton Wilder, Arthur Miller, Archibald MacLeish, John Steinbeck).

Pauly's efforts fall short only when he attempts to round out his lucid, descriptive narrative with an occasional heavy-handed interpretation of Kazan's emotional and psychological make-up as it relates to his work. After reading the book it is easy to see why Pauly falters; it's very hard not to speculate on Kazan's life. His previously uncharted odyssey is ripe for any number of critical interpretations. Pauly simply attempts too much: to provide both the missing catalogue of the events, people and productions in Kazan's life, and a prescriptive assessment of Kazan's "artistic achievement."

An inventory of his chapter titles reveals a familiar American paradigm that Pauly uses to structure Kazan's life: "Heritage of the Outsider," "Strength and Sensitivity," "The Conquest of Broadway," "The Fox Way," "Taking Charge," "Man of Individual Conscience," "Comeback," and "Quest for Self-Expressiveness." Beginning as a poor Greek immigrant on the outside of American culture, a hard-working and sensitive Kazan pulls hard on his own bootstraps to transcend his proletarian caste in an effort to "conquer" Broadway and Hollywood, and rattle the establishment. Along the way he falls from prominence, makes an impressive comeback, reclaims his stature, and retires to write his memoirs. Pauly's Americana plot curve structures Kazan's life so as to suggest that *An American Odyssey* is an attempt at cinema hagiography.

There is no lack of evidence to substantiate the lofty aspirations of Pauly's chapter headings. During his career, Kazan collaborated with the best and brightest artists of his time, acting in and directing numerous (69) plays and films; helped to establish the genre of "social realism"; won prized awards; battled Hollywood moguls; ensnarled himself in political controversy; and contributed several classic works to the American canon of stage and screen. Pauly's work is most attractive and convincing when it chronicles Kazan's fledgling career in the agit-prop drama of the Group Theatre, the filming of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and the enigmatic behavior of Kazan during the McCarthy investigations into "un-American" activity.

An American Odyssey falters when Pauly's penchant for theorizing about the relation between Kazan's psychological status and his work is not supported by the ncessary resources. Kazan, who is reluctant to give interviews, has prohibited access to his letters, scrapbooks, and notes. Undaunted by this restriction on his scholarship, Pauly mistakenly ventures beyond his chronologic descriptions to speculate about the psychological underpinnings of Kazan's artistic achievement. For example, at the close of his chapter on Kazan's conquest of Broadway, which includes a superbly detailed study of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Pauly states: "These dramas reasserted the injured sense of alienation Kazan had been harboring for years, and, in their innovative concentration upon the disturbed psychology of this condition, they reflected Kazan's movement into psychoanalysis. These were dramas in which the director's introspection was playing a strong supporting role." (p. 87) Here Pauly offers an undocumented, though interesting, interpretation of the relation between Kazan's psycho-

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analytic profile and his directing. However, until Kazan shares his thoughts and memorabilia with his biographers, such interpretation is mere conjecture.

Of the many interpretive studies that await critical attention, one particularly interesting one is the examination of Kazan's life with an eye for those distinctively American characteristics of his odyssey. A place to begin is with the film *America, America*, one of his last and one that he wrote and directed. The film is about a young Greek immigrant's struggle in America. It opens with a dark screen, followed by Kazan's voice-over, "My name is Elia Kazan. I am a Greek by blood, a Turk by birth, and an American because my uncle made a journey . . . " Here one is reminded of Kazan's unwillingness to share his personal memorabilia with biographers in that, as *America, America* reveals, at the end of his career he appears preoccupied with the story of his own life. He has been writing his memoirs for almost ten years now. Why does an idealistic young actor, who began his career working in an ensemble theatre troupe, conclude his career alone, immersed in autobiography? And is there any particularly American cause for this journey into isolation? Does Kazan fall prey to the egoistic individualism that often consumes Americans in their quest for fulfillment?

—CARL DOLAN

SEVEN DIRECTOR STUDIES

ALFRED HITCHCOCK by Gene D. Phillips. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984. $15.95.
FRANK CAPRA by Charles F. Maland. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980.
JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ by Bernard F. Dick. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983. $19.95.
WILLIAM WYLER: *A Guide to References and Resources* by Sharon Kern. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984. $45.00.
NICHOLAS RAY: *A Guide to References and Resources* by Blaine Allan. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984. $49.95.
ROBERT ALTMAN: *A Guide to References and Resources* by Virginia Wright Wexman and Gretchen Bisplinghoff. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984. $42.00.
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA: *A Guide to References and Resources* by Joel S. Zucker. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984. $39.95.

The Twayne series of auteurist studies were thought authoritative—if stodgy—until G. K. Hall began its line-up of well-researched bibliographies, filmographies, and critical histories. These may be less thoughtful or readable than the Twayne books, but the information is all there in compact encyclopedic style. The only drawback of such thorough scholarship is when it is applied to auteurs-in-progress, such as Coppola or Altman, who still (one hopes) have a good many films in them, it renders critical pronouncements at best premature, and at worst too cautious for fear of being overturned by subsequent additions to the *oeuvre*.

The Twayne series, on the other hand, allows its authors a point of view that *can* justify yet another book on Hitchcock or Capra. Gene D. Phillips, a.k.a. Father Phillips of Loyola University, brings a fascinating Jesuit perspective to Hitchcock who claimed that three years of studying with the Jesuits terrified him to death so that his subsequent life's work was to terrify others. Nevertheless, Phillips has scrupulously avoided the psychobabble that has riddled the critical work done by people as diverse as Donald Spoto and Phillip French. In fact, the major accomplishment of Phillips in this work is to steer a course through the films, their images, and the alternative images known from research that revealed the "roads not taken" by Hitch the film-maker without interpreting the man behind the films. Beginning with a very good interpretation of *Blackmail*, he tracks the elements of a Hitchcock thriller that were disconcerting and convention-defying and shows how they became stylistic trademarks, as Hitch learned to pack his own clever character studies into a genre that had never been taken that seriously.

Phillips's attention to "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" provides a very good guide through the television years, leaving one wishing he had focused the entire book on the subject and used the films only in reference to the TV refinements. His lead-in is an analysis of two early short films made for propaganda purposes during the war. Phillips has a keen sense of how Hitchcock responded to formulaic demands, and this insight could have been a major contribution to scholarship—Hitchcock the TV personality and moralist—rather than the pièce de resistance of a book that is otherwise interesting primarily for its restraint. Just as Hitchcock treated murder with great delicacy, savoring every possible motive, so Phillips has treated Hitchcock with delicacy albeit without delving into those motives that have made him more controversial than his work.

principles that may be visible only in retrospect, and allow cinema to unveil the world in less than two hours. In contrast, a book in the G. K. Hall format on Nicholas Ray cannot do justice to Ray's creating "cult" films that lope and lurch and are about disorder, prompting reviewers like Sarris to find them "kinetic" or critics like Thomas Elsaesser to delve in to their "uncertainty of purpose, the insecurity of place . . . constantly translated into a pattern of visual segments." Blaine Allan, who wrote this book, hasn't the room to stretch his intellectual muscles. He summarizes and respectfully quotes other critics and uses phrases such as "a confrontation of the filmic and the profilmic, the textual and the contextual, what is on film and what events enveloped the filmmaking," which seems to keep common sense at arm's length in a volume devoted to the nuts and bolts of criticism. But then he is discussing *Lightning Over Water* in order to illustrate Wenders's usurpation of Ray's position, a "profilmic" event that surely occurred because Wenders read too much such criticism about Ray (or possibly himself). Certainly Ray is one of those modernist directors who lived his life as a film-maker and seemed to make films in order to maintain his role within his own cult.

Ray is certainly the predecessor for Robert Altman and Francis Ford Coppola, to whom two more G. K. Hall books have been devoted. Despite my reservations about such comprehensive studies being done on directors in mid-career (Altman's and Coppola's films have, in fact, changed in extraordinary ways since the manuscripts were completed) both volumes give their directors the kind of treatment they deserve, with the Wexman-Bisplinghoff volume on Altman being far superior. It has the saving grace of enjoying Altman's work instead of trying to explain why he is socially relevant; the focus on his comic concerns brings forth good judgments from the authors. But what would they say of his dramatic adaptations such as *Secret Honor*? How does that fit into Altman's irrepressible subversion of genres? And is it considerations of space that force them into head-scratchers like "Altman's preference for fragmentation means that the synthesis he achieves is a difficult one because paradox is often emphasized over unity"? It seems that Altman's preference for paradox leads us to judge his work as fragmented, although paradox is not possible without having complementary or contrasting views of the same problem or theme; paradox implies a unity of sorts. Even this could use more development, editor willing, but it illustrates the critical dilemmas the G. K. Hall essays skirt.

For the volume on Francis Ford Coppola, Joel S. Zuker breaks down his critical survey into a sophomoric division: narrative, the image, set design, color, sound, music, etc., and then says the truly obvious things about each one. Floundering in clichés, the essay is a quick and dirty job that illustrates what the G. K. Hall books can become if not properly managed: lists of reference works gathered but unread by the collator, or at least undigested. Zuker is very good at plot-synopsis and seems to include much fascinating trivia. And with all the bibliographical research done, it's a sure bet that more doctoral dissertations will be written about G. K. Hall auteurs than most others.

—KAREN JAEHNE

BEHIND THE MIRROR

(UK title: *A Japanese Mirror*) By Ian Buruma. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Ian Buruma has written a book like no other on Japan. Drawing on his own seven-year experience as a participant observer, he has submitted an evaluation of contemporary Japanese life that is at the same time fully supported by serious scholarship. His writing reflects neither the "how to beat them at their own game" approach of the pop psycho-economists, nor the breathlessly reverent attitude of the art historians and film critics who over the years have tried to make the rest of the world believe Japan is all Zen, purity and/or Marxism. A uniquely non-Japanophile yet fully informed approach allows Buruma to study everything from striptease to emperor veneration with equal zeal, drawing the vulgar and the sublime together in one of the most revealing cultural analyses of recent years.

Cinema comprises a major portion of Buruma's study. The years this Dutch nephew of film director John Schlesinger spent in Japan were devoted largely to the pursuit of theater and film at or in spite of Nihon University in Tokyo. But Buruma does not treat film sepa-

rately from the other arts. It appears in support of broader conclusions alongside other media such as television, comic books, song and literature.

The book is divided into three sections that indicate Buruma's basic areas of interest: women, homosexuals and transvestites, and men, in that order. In each area, film reveals some of the culture's foundations. A chapter on "The Eternal Mother," for example, introduces the longsuffering actress Yuko Mochizuki, "The Mother of Japan," in such films as Keisuke Kinoshita's *A Japanese Tragedy*. The same chapter also covers Kenji Mizoguchi's ambivalent attitude toward women in his films and his life, while treating the eighth-century poetry of the *Man-yoshu* anthology, kabuki theater, the writing of modern novelist Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, and comic books and television serials.

In short, Buruma's analysis grasps at all cultural levels and extends as far back into history as possible. What it reveals is a persistent cultural image. In the case of "The Eternal Mother," it is the backbone concept of the matriarchal goddess of the Shinto religion that emerges in the earliest Japanese mythologies all the way down to the contemporary films of Shohei Imamura.

This format continues throughout the book: a broad culling of cultural and historical evidence leads to the fleshing out and reinforcement of an image. The only problem with this approach is a speed and breadth that may leave the uninitiated reeling in the dust. If one has no experience of Japan or exposure to its lore already, Buruma's vast dancing array of names, dates and italicized concepts may prove too heady a brew to digest at one reading. One must always keep in mind that each item he brings up forms a colored tile in a great mosaic pattern that is Japanese culture. For the film specialist, on the one hand this is a dense mass of extraneous information to be sifted through, but on the other hand it is also a rich trove of background information to support cinematic analyses. I have found the book very useful, if controversial, in a Japanese film course.

Controversy arises more from Buruma's style than from any question as to the validity of his material. He is unabashedly and unrelentingly sarcastic. The concluding chapter, "A Gentle People," for example, contains the following:

> Popular fantasies of sex and violence are usually hysterical too. They remind one of children screaming because they have no other way of expressing their needs. A scream, though, is normally a spontaneous action. Ritual screaming, naturally, is not. The bizarre excesses of Japanese popular culture are as bound by stylistic conventions as the tea ceremony, flower arranging and other aesthetic pastimes. Even play conforms to strict patterns. (p. 224)

The above assertion is borne out by many a hilarious description of the rankings of bathhouse girl hierarchies, the protocol for visits to strip coffee shops, and the progression of behavior on an average drunken evening out with the boys. A tone of detached amusement pervades the whole book, and it is this quality that unifies the diverse themes and source materials. Buruma takes advantage of the distance that being foreign gives him to delve into areas no entrenched academic Japanese would ever dare present to the West. But far from mere sensationalism, his book offers some deeply felt and carefully researched keys to both the bizarre and the ordinary in Japanese culture.

—AUDIE BOCK

AMERICAN FILM AND SOCIETY SINCE 1945

By Leonard Quart and Albert Auster. New York: Praeger, 1984. $12.95 paper.

Given the all-encompassing nature of its title, one would expect *American Film and Society Since 1945* to be a tome of Olympian proportions. Regrettably, Auster and Quart have labored on a mountainous topic to bring forth a mouse-sized book. Quart and Auster have set for themselves the formidable task of illuminating the interaction between the Hollywood dream-machinery (in the period of its most complex historical development) and the social realities of the four decades since World War II, perhaps the most turbulent 40 years in American history. As they observe in the volume's introduction, "There is no question that films can both reflect and reinforce popular preconceptions, and for some Americans cinematic images . . . can sadly become a substitute for reality itself."

While there is no gainsaying this generality, *American Film* is a book which offers little enlightenment in its discussions of the complex dialectic of image and reality. Auster and Quart are content to alternate quickie canned history and analyses of individual films which seldom

rately from the other arts. It appears in support of broader conclusions alongside other media such as television, comic books, song and literature.

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This format continues throughout the book: a broad culling of cultural and historical evidence leads to the fleshing out and reinforcement of an image. The only problem with this approach is a speed and breadth that may leave the uninitiated reeling in the dust. If one has no experience of Japan or exposure to its lore already, Buruma's vast dancing array of names, dates and italicized concepts may prove too heady a brew to digest at one reading. One must always keep in mind that each item he brings up forms a colored tile in a great mosaic pattern that is Japanese culture. For the film specialist, on the one hand this is a dense mass of extraneous information to be sifted through, but on the other hand it is also a rich trove of background information to support cinematic analyses. I have found the book very useful, if controversial, in a Japanese film course.

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> Popular fantasies of sex and violence are usually hysterical too. They remind one of children screaming because they have no other way of expressing their needs. A scream, though, is normally a spontaneous action. Ritual screaming, naturally, is not. The bizarre excesses of Japanese popular culture are as bound by stylistic conventions as the tea ceremony, flower arranging and other aesthetic pastimes. Even play conforms to strict patterns. (p. 224)

The above assertion is borne out by many a hilarious description of the rankings of bathhouse girl hierarchies, the protocol for visits to strip coffee shops, and the progression of behavior on an average drunken evening out with the boys. A tone of detached amusement pervades the whole book, and it is this quality that unifies the diverse themes and source materials. Buruma takes advantage of the distance that being foreign gives him to delve into areas no entrenched academic Japanese would ever dare present to the West. But far from mere sensationalism, his book offers some deeply felt and carefully researched keys to both the bizarre and the ordinary in Japanese culture.

—AUDIE BOCK

AMERICAN FILM AND SOCIETY SINCE 1945

By Leonard Quart and Albert Auster. New York: Praeger, 1984. $12.95 paper.

Given the all-encompassing nature of its title, one would expect *American Film and Society Since 1945* to be a tome of Olympian proportions. Regrettably, Auster and Quart have labored on a mountainous topic to bring forth a mouse-sized book. Quart and Auster have set for themselves the formidable task of illuminating the interaction between the Hollywood dream-machinery (in the period of its most complex historical development) and the social realities of the four decades since World War II, perhaps the most turbulent 40 years in American history. As they observe in the volume's introduction, "There is no question that films can both reflect and reinforce popular preconceptions, and for some Americans cinematic images . . . can sadly become a substitute for reality itself."

While there is no gainsaying this generality, *American Film* is a book which offers little enlightenment in its discussions of the complex dialectic of image and reality. Auster and Quart are content to alternate quickie canned history and analyses of individual films which seldom

do more than nibble at the central issue that their introduction proposes. What the book lacks is a coherent methodology which might suggest the tensions between historical conjuncture and ideological content.

There is an arbitrary, hurried quality to *American Film*. The chapters are broken down by decade, an unsatisfactory choice which eludes the complexities of history. The choice of films is equally capricious. Are the biggest box-office successes the most representative films of a period? If so, why not write a book that includes such blockbusters as *Around the World in 80 Days* and *The Robe*?

The authors seem to place more weight on initial critical success as a criterion, spending a great deal of time on films like *Crossfire* and *Reds*, neither of which was a huge hit in its time. Even retrospective critical judgments come into play here: writing about the McCarthyite strain in fifties science fiction, Quart and Auster obviously privilege *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* over *Red Planet Mars* and *Invaders from Mars* because it is a better film. But does that make it a better indicator of the public mood? This is a question at the heart of the dilemma which faces any sociological critic.

Although *American Film and Society Since 1945* is not devoid of insight (there is an exemplary discussion of *Viva Zapata!*, for example), it is riddled with bad grammar, stiff prose, sloppy copyediting and careless research. Some of the mistakes are trivial, such as the misspelling of the name of the Rock Hudson character in *Giant* (Bick, not Vic), giving *They Drive By Night* as Nick Ray's first feature, misspelling Jules Munshin's name a couple of times, or misstating plot details of *Body Snatchers* and *Force of Evil*. A few are downright embarrassing, such as quoting Dr. King's 1963 March on Washington speech as "I had a dream."

Infinitely more damaging are errors of historical fact or assertions that are arguably not demonstrable which betray the authors' unconscious biases. The most jarring of these continue the romanticizing of John F. Kennedy. Quart and Auster attribute to Eisenhower the mythical "missile gap," a JFK rhetorical device which enabled him to move to Nixon's right in the presidential campaign debates. Similarly, they claim that Lyndon Johnson was "more conservative" than Kennedy when the two were in the Senate, a dubious assertion. Finally, they repeat the old canard that Kennedy had already decided at the time of his death to withdraw US troops from Vietnam—a point on which the evidence is at best divided and inconclusive.

There is a real need for the book that *American Film and Society Since 1945* purports to be. But Quart and Auster, lacking any but a syncretic pseudo-methodology, wrenching individual films out of their historical context in order to force them, square-peg-like, into round but narrow sociological holes, have not written it. —GEORGE ROBINSON

FILM AND THE DREAM SCREEN
A Sleep and a Forgetting

By Robert T. Eberwein. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. $27.50.

The analogy between film and dream is a familiar one, but in recent years, the discussion of subject positioning and its relationship to the unconscious, language, and visual pleasure has increased theoretical interest in the topic. Christian Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier* exemplifies the trends that have accorded the dream / film connection an important place in film theory. The most well-known and influential of current approaches to dream and film, Metz's use of the traditional Freudian account of dream process coupled with his Lacanian-based explanation of spectator subject formation is perhaps the dominant but not the only paradigm. Interesting models have been adapted from the neurophysiological dream research that has directly challenged Freud's conclusions and replaced his disguise-censorship theory of dream with an activation-synthesis model.[1] Among those writing from this perspective in film studies are Vlada Petrić and Marsha Kinder. Kinder's work, in particular, has often foregrounded the interesting possibility that dream plays an evolutionary role, a mediating function between brains and genes. On the other hand, as Kinder also suggests, film (and TV) may not only resemble our dreams, but may be imprinting them in a cultural and ideological sense.[2] Such alternative models encourage us to reconsider the structure of dreams as they point to the need to rethink our fundamental ideas regarding the interplay of film and dream experience

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and the physiological, psychological, and cultural function of each.

Robert Eberwein's *Film and the Dream Screen* pursues yet another avenue to the film/dream connection and the spectatorial regime. In developing his psychoanalytic approach, Eberwein relies primarily on the work of psychoanalyst Bertram Lewin. In 1946, Lewin introduced the concept that all dreamers, whether aware of it or not, project their dreams upon a blank screen, a "dream screen," that represents the maternal breast, the first site of falling asleep into dream.

Lewin readily admitted that the similarities between the dream screen phenomenon and film were not lost on him in the very act of naming the discovery.[3] While Eberwein's is the first book length study on the dream screen's relationship to film, he is not the first theorist to adapt and apply Lewin's hypothesis to film. Among other theorists to mention Lewin's work is Jean-Louis Baudry, who offers a limited but provocative discussion of the spectatorial implications arising from the dream screen notion in "The Apparatus: An Introduction" (1976).[4] For Baudry, the infant's "hallucination" of the breast at the beginning of falling asleep/dreaming demonstrates "the lack of distinction between representation and perception." (p. 117) Baudry believes the "lack of distinction" extends into the concepts of active/passive, acting/suffering, body/breast and eating/being eaten. He contends that the dream screen and its specific drive phase context (the oral phase) helps us to understand a type of identification experienced by the dreamer (and by the film viewer) characteristic of a time in life prior to Lacan's noted mirror phase. By re-creating the *mise en scène* of desire and satisfaction (the breast/dream screen), the cinema defines its own desirability. (p. 118)

Eberwein's view essentially is very much like Baudry's, but he does not address the issues of subject formation implied in Baudry's statements, specifically, that the cinema's associations with a pre-Oedipal modality of regression may encourage or cause viewing pleasure that is not structured by oppositions. Of course, this brings to mind the polarizations—active/passive, sadistic voyeurism/masochistic exhibitionism, male/female, symbolic/imaginary—that have played a central role in many theories of cinematic subjectivity including, for example, Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Because film theory has emphasized phallic phase or Oedipal conflicts in many explanations of the psychoanalytic basis of spectatorial pleasure, Eberwein's emphasis on pre-Oedipal factors in visual pleasure is noteworthy, even though he does not confront the problems of a sexually differentiated spectatorship.

Eberwein does insist that there is a crucial psychical merger between the film spectator and the screen object which mimes and draws upon the experience of the infant dreamer, but he does not venture very far beyond proposing the existence of the merger. Film, like dream, says Eberwein, creates a feeling of oneness as well as a perceptual "fusion" reviving the original oral experience of pleasure at the dream screen/breast. Eberwein theorizes that the film spectator experiences a regressive loss of ego-boundaries emulating that of the nursing child and the adult dreamer. Not only does the spectator experience film as a "dream screen," but he/she also regains a sense of unity with perception that recalls infantile perceptual experience. The desire for cinema's illusion of reality is associated with the confusion of perception and hallucination (representation) found in the oral phase and linked to the nursing child's experience of reality and pleasure at the breast (p. 40).

Eberwein convincingly draws upon the work of psychologists and psychoanalysts such as D. W. Winnicott, Rene Spitz, and Jean Piaget, who have done important studies on infantile behavior and object relations. Eberwein provides a lucid overview of these researchers' various commentaries as he discusses the subjectivity of film spectatorship as it relates to oral phase and dream screen activity. An expansion of Eberwein's theory into a discussion of exactly how his focus on the pre-Oedipal phase in forming cinematic pleasure might challenge or complement the dominant paradigm of subject formation would have been welcome. Eberwein tantalizingly mentions a resemblance between Winnicott's observations on the child's creation of the breast through imagination and Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, but chooses to leave the theoretical development of his hypo-

thesis and use the remainder (and majority) of his book in practical application.

"Part Two: Watching the Dream Screen" is concerned with illustrating Eberwein's contention that spectators are drawn into a potentially even deeper involvement with a film when it depicts a dream or dreamlike state. The dream-within-the-film and the spectator's own cinematic dream screen may merge to become "a meeting place for shared oneiric experiences" forging a bond between spectator and film character. (p. 90) The first subsection of Part Two, "A Taxonomy of Dreams," begins with a description of various categories of film sequences in which characters' dreams are displayed or the film presents an "authorless" dreamlike state. Categories of filmic dreams include those showing mind/body isomorphism, dreams of traumatic events, dreams of desire and proleptic dreams. These descriptions/readings are followed by an exploration of what Eberwein calls "manifest dream screens." These are films in which the character's dream screen and that of the spectator "merge," as in *Sherlock, Jr., Persona,* and *Spellbound.* The survey of modes of dream presentation concludes with the category of filmic dreams that are retroactively revealed to be oneiric. Such films, says Eberwein, rob us of the "ownership of our vision" to force a reconsideration of the film's perspective. (p. 141)

In spite of his assertion that the depiction of dream in film causes a "new phenomenological relationship with the cinematic screen and with the dreaming mind represented there," Eberwein chooses to shy away from committing himself to the position that filmic dreams always increase viewer involvement in the film. (p. 53) He does affirm the "potential" for a special type of response because "when we are particularly involved in the dream, the cinematic dream screen becomes a vehicle offording us greater contact with a character's mental life than is ordinarily the case." (p. 54) The disclaimer aside, Eberwein's readings of films often encourage the assumption that these dream sequences do consistently evoke an intensified spectatorial response. His examples of cinematic dreams are taken from a broad range of films, from Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* to Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks, Gone with the Wind* to *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie.* His discussions of dream sequences are sometimes cursory; their value often seems limited to identifying the example's place in a specific dream category. At other times, as in the case of *Persona* and *Belle du Jour,* Eberwein offers an interesting rereading of the film that concentrates on the dreamlike aspects of the film and the role of the dream screen either as displayed within the film or experienced by the spectator.

As with his basic theory presented in Part 1, the methodology used by Eberwein in the practical application of the hypothesis is an eclectic mixture, neither Freudian (as Lewin's own interpretations of his patients were) nor tied to any other single interpretive model. Here again, Eberwein does not reveal how his theory or readings might be viewed within the context of current theoretical discourse on dream, visual pleasure, and film. Although he deals with several Buñuel films, he never places his view of the films within the context of critical debate. While Eberwein notes that *Un Chien Andalou* is not meant to show a dream, he asserts that as viewers we "experience the work as if it were our own dream, one from which we cannot escape or awake." (p. 83) In *Figures of Desire* Linda Williams persuasively argues that surrealist films, including *Un Chien Andalou,* actually question or break the normal process of identification with film.[5] Eberwein's conclusions radically contrast with Williams's. A direct comparison would have illuminated Eberwein's view of spectatorial identification and perhaps offered the opportunity for him to deal with the interplay of verbal language and figuration from the perspective of the viewer's regression into an oral mode of perception.

Unlike Metz, Eberwein exclusively stresses the points of likeness between dreaming and film spectatorship. By integrating a discussion of the role of disavowal or the autonomy of film as an obviously "non-dreamed" entity, Eberwein might have strengthened his theory. Eberwein also ignores Metz's assertion (a valid one, I think) from *The Imaginary Signifier* that dream sequences in films are often unbelievable because film cannot easily emulate the surface "incomprehensibility" of dreams. (p. 121) Metz's statement raises the question of how different dream styles in film

may be more or less effective on the basis of the film-maker's conscious attempt to reconstruct "dreaminess" or unconsciously motivated structures or even, as in the case of Bergman and Fellini, the film-maker's use of his own dreamlife as the basis of his films.

This is not to invalidate the contribution of *Film and the Dream Screen*. It is a carefully considered and informative work, but it does not provoke or challenge as it might have. Metz's enticement as a theorist often stems partially from the charm of his contradictory or elusively obscure speculations. By contrast, Eberwein makes straightforwardness both a virtue and a vice. His clear prose style could almost be considered an anomaly in theoretical writing. Its clarity is refreshing, but his self-effacing style and steadfastly nonpolemic stance may mislead some readers into dismissing the dream screen concept as not being very crucial to our notions of spectatorial pleasure. While Eberwein's book may not explore all the theoretical potential in its basic hypothesis, it is a valuable addition to the discussion of subjectivity as well as a useful introduction for those unacquainted with the study of the relationship of film and dream.

—GAYLYN STUDLAR

NOTES

1. J. Allan Hobson and R. W. McCarley, "The Brain as a Dream State Generator: an Activation-Synthesis Hypothesis of the Dream Process," *American Journal of Psychiatry,* 134 (1977), 1335-1348.

2. See Vlada Petrić's *Film and Dreams: An Approach to Bergman* (South Salem, NY: Redgrave Publishing Co., 1981). In this anthology edited by Petrić, articles are offered from the neurobiological approach. See also Marsha Kinder's "Music Video and the Spectator: Television, Ideology and Dream," *FQ* 38, 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 2-15, and her "The Adaptation of Cinematic Dreams," *Dreamworks* 1, 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 216-225.

3. Bertram Lewin, "Inferences From the Dream Screen," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 29 (1948), p. 224.

4. Jean Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: An Introduction," *Camera Obscura,* 1, (Fall 1976), pp. 99-126.

5. Linda Williams, *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 4-5.

DANCING LEDGE

By Derek Jarman. London: Quartet Books, 1984, $12.95.

It is with bone-chilling irony that Derek Jarman dedicates this volume of memoirs "To the British Cinema," for as the happy few familiar with his work are well aware, that institution has precious little use for talents such as his. Painter, sculptor, set designer for opera and ballet, Jarman began making his mark on the cinema in the early seventies, first through his decorative skills (the massive eye-popping all-white sets of Ken Russell's *The Devils*), and then in a series of independently made features. *Sebastiane* (1975) had the audacity to reimagine the passion of the martyred saint on a rocky sun-drenched plain where naked muscular youths eyed and groped one another at will, their dialogue entirely in Latin. *Jubilee* (1977), a punk-rock fantasy conceived when the movement was still in its infancy, further testified to Jarman's daring. Best of all was *The Tempest* (1979), a 90-minute digest of Shakespeare's play filmed in a leaf-encrusted mansion, with a Cherkassov-like rendering of Prospero by playwright Heathcote Williams, and a finale in which fabled jazz singer Elizabeth Welch warbles "Stormy Weather."

Comparable in homoerotic imaginativeness to the best of Cocteau, Jack Smith, and Werner Schroeter, while keeping faith with a purely British strain of convulsive romanticism (Lean, Powell, Fisher, Russell), this trio *should* have established Jarman as a British film-maker of the first rank. But mere talent can never compete with success—especially of the variety the British have so successfully marketed over the past decade. *Chariots of Fire* (neatly pegged by Jarman "a damp British *Triumph of the Will*"), *The Draughtsman's Contract, Gandhi, The Killing Fields,* all prime products of the Thatcher era, revel in middle-class "good taste" and artistic stultification on the home shore, while serving as the *ne plus ultra* of Reaganite Kultur abroad. Pushed into 8mm film-making partly by temperament, partly by lack of other options, Jarman has fared no better—his brightly colored images anathema to avant-garde "theorists" like Peter Gidal.

Jarman has every right to bitterness about all of this, yet through some 250 pages of text barely a trace of it slips through. He's far too busy recounting his impressions of a rich and varied career that moves from the art scene of the sixties, to the ballet world, to a film-making environment he had to more

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or less invent from scratch in face of the indifference and hostility of the twin establishments (un)available to him. Vivid and engagingly written, Jarman's book trips back and forth in time weaving together portraits of David Hockney (they went to art school together), Rudolph Nureyev, Ken Russell (an hilarious recounting of the shooting of *The Devils*) and many others. Jarman is never less than candid, and his remarks on the Falklands war and its aftermath are especially interesting as are his frequent asides about the changes wrought in homosexual life over the past decade. "Now," Jarman writes ruefully of the latter, "all this has turned into a desert of ageing lawyers and execs with hangdog moustaches and work-out muscles; brawn triumphs here after midnight while the scrambled brains are left somewhere in the closet." Jarman's brains, however, are happily in perfect working order. —DAVID EHRENSTEIN

HOLLYWOOD BABYLON II

By Kenneth Anger. New York: Dutton, 1984. $24.95.

When released as a cheap paperback in the early sixties, Kenneth Anger's original *Hollywood Babylon* enjoyed minor cult status for its titillating exposure of (frequently apocryphal) tinseltown scandals seen as too libelous even for the likes of *Hollywood Confidential* or *On the Q.T.* Upon its reissue in a glossy, large-format edition by Straight Arrow Books in the seventies, *Hollywood Babylon* achieved a new image not so much as a collection of sordid chit-chat but as a debunking of a studio system already in disarray; the horrendous and ludicrous underside of the film industry was set against the whipped cream vision of America which reinforced the fantasies of several generations.

Hollywood Babylon was not, of course, meant as a serious critique of Hollywood ideology. Its selling point, like that of this sequel, is a revelling in the decay it peruses. Anger sets up *Hollywood Babylon II* as a sequel in the movie sense of the term; the book contains a photographic "prelude" and coda. It fulfills the reader's expectations by being a structural duplicate of the first installment, complete with Anger's effete humor and self-conscious, caustic prose. While this book takes a stab at investigative journalism (the account of Joe Kennedy's fling at RKO), some of the material is rather dated. Tales of the "human ash tray" Jimmy Dean are recycled from the original *Babylon,* probably because such were seen as too provocative for the self-aggrandizing Straight Arrow edition that gave the first book national exposure. (Many of Anger's earlier *Babylon* exposures, such as Tyrone Power's coprophagia, have never been graced by these hardbound editions.)

Babylon II's key revelations are underwritten or passé; nude pictures of Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo have already appeared in the skin magazines, and a two-page chapter on Gloria Swanson that simply calls her a "witch" says nothing at all.

The politics of Anger's work must be called into question. Anger again invites us (through a still on the dust jacket) to recall him as the child actor who was, perhaps, traumatized by the nonsense he endured. The cognoscenti of course are aware of Anger as avant-garde film-maker, whose *Scorpio Rising* investigates, among other things, the messianic impulse contained in the mediated image. Such perceptions of the author do not, however, provide a rationale for the *Babylon* books. If Anger-the-thirdstream-film-maker is attacking the hypocrisy and exploitation of the commercial industry, there seems little reason for meandering through the drug addiction, the overeating, the sexual proclivities of individual stars whose principal "sin" would appear to be their buying-in to the studio system. Anger's approach of course does as much to dehumanize these stars—as pathetic as their escapisms may be—as the economic system that created and promoted them.

Anger may preserve his integrity at least in the disclaimer of his epigraphs: in *Babylon II* he uses two, La Rochefoucauld's "We all have the strength to endure the misfortune of others," and his recycled Aleister Crowley quote (which appears the emblem of Anger's work), "Every Man and every Woman is a Star." Even coming from a demented aristocrat, with its occult overtone, the quote evinces a levelling, democratic spirit that may be Anger's greatest assault on Hollywood mythmaking. —CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

or less invent from scratch in face of the indifference and hostility of the twin establishments (un)available to him. Vivid and engagingly written, Jarman's book trips back and forth in time weaving together portraits of David Hockney (they went to art school together), Rudolph Nureyev, Ken Russell (an hilarious recounting of the shooting of *The Devils*) and many others. Jarman is never less than candid, and his remarks on the Falklands war and its aftermath are especially interesting as are his frequent asides about the changes wrought in homosexual life over the past decade. "Now," Jarman writes ruefully of the latter, "all this has turned into a desert of ageing lawyers and execs with hangdog moustaches and work-out muscles; brawn triumphs here after midnight while the scrambled brains are left somewhere in the closet." Jarman's brains, however, are happily in perfect working order. —DAVID EHRENSTEIN

HOLLYWOOD BABYLON II

By Kenneth Anger. New York: Dutton, 1984. $24.95.

When released as a cheap paperback in the early sixties, Kenneth Anger's original *Hollywood Babylon* enjoyed minor cult status for its titillating exposure of (frequently apocryphal) tinseltown scandals seen as too libelous even for the likes of *Hollywood Confidential* or *On the Q.T.* Upon its reissue in a glossy, large-format edition by Straight Arrow Books in the seventies, *Hollywood Babylon* achieved a new image not so much as a collection of sordid chit-chat but as a debunking of a studio system already in disarray; the horrendous and ludicrous underside of the film industry was set against the whipped cream vision of America which reinforced the fantasies of several generations.

Hollywood Babylon was not, of course, meant as a serious critique of Hollywood ideology. Its selling point, like that of this sequel, is a revelling in the decay it peruses. Anger sets up *Hollywood Babylon II* as a sequel in the movie sense of the term; the book contains a photographic "prelude" and coda. It fulfills the reader's expectations by being a structural duplicate of the first installment, complete with Anger's effete humor and self-conscious, caustic prose. While this book takes a stab at investigative journalism (the account of Joe Kennedy's fling at RKO), some of the material is rather dated. Tales of the "human ash tray" Jimmy Dean are recycled from the original *Babylon,* probably because such were seen as too provocative for the self-aggrandizing Straight Arrow edition that gave the first book national exposure. (Many of Anger's earlier *Babylon* exposures, such as Tyrone Power's coprophagia, have never been graced by these hardbound editions.)

Babylon II's key revelations are underwritten or passé; nude pictures of Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo have already appeared in the skin magazines, and a two-page chapter on Gloria Swanson that simply calls her a "witch" says nothing at all.

The politics of Anger's work must be called into question. Anger again invites us (through a still on the dust jacket) to recall him as the child actor who was, perhaps, traumatized by the nonsense he endured. The cognoscenti of course are aware of Anger as avant-garde film-maker, whose *Scorpio Rising* investigates, among other things, the messianic impulse contained in the mediated image. Such perceptions of the author do not, however, provide a rationale for the *Babylon* books. If Anger-the-thirdstream-film-maker is attacking the hypocrisy and exploitation of the commercial industry, there seems little reason for meandering through the drug addiction, the overeating, the sexual proclivities of individual stars whose principal "sin" would appear to be their buying-in to the studio system. Anger's approach of course does as much to dehumanize these stars—as pathetic as their escapisms may be—as the economic system that created and promoted them.

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FRENCH FILM BOOKS 1984-85

by Paul R. Michaud

With more than 150 major works on the cinema, 1984-1985 was a most productive year for the French film-book industry, one of the most prolific in recent memory. As in the previous year, practically all of the works published were originals, the few translations issued being from Italian rather than English. The US cinema took a back seat to other national cinemas this year, which produced more works about the cinemas of Africa, China, Germany, India, Italy and Japan than about Hollywood.

Appropriately, though this was not always the case previously, the cinema dealt with by the largest number of works was that of France. There were books on just about every phase of French film history, everything from J. Rittaud-Hutinet's excellent study of the worldwide operations of the Lumière Brothers (*Les Premiers temps du cinéma*) and *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque's* special number on "Cinéma et Mémoire rurale" to Philippe de Comes's and Michel Marmin's *Le Cinéma français depuis la guerre.* Strangely, there was no attempt this year to come to grips with a new generation of French film-makers, perhaps because in reality there is none. There were much fewer theoretical works, and very few screenplays. There were a good many profiles and studies of film auteurs, from Olivier Barrot's long-awaited *René Clair ou le temps mesuré* to Maurice Bessy's elegant *Erich Von Stroheim* to Pierre Lherminier's very thorough *Jean Vigo*, not to mention new editions of seminal works on Max Ophuls (by Claude Beylie) and Jean Gremillon (Henri Agel).

It was the year, notably, of Marguerite Duras (whose autobiographical novel, *L'Amant*, sold at last count 800,000 copies), of Sacha Guitry (whose 100th birthday was marked by the publication of two sumptuous volumes), and of Luchino Visconti (1984 saw publication, at long last, of his screenply for Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, but also of Paul-Louis Thirard's and Alain Sanzio's prizewinning *Luchino Visconti cineaste*). It was also, but then sadly, the year of François Truffaut, whose death last October 21st was marked by numerous publications, notably a special issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma* which ironically, in attempting to pay him tribute ("using the words he would have used himself") became so overadulatory that it didn't do Truffaut justice at all.

If quantity was high, so too was quality. In this regard, one would have to list as the highlights of the current publishing season the following works: Henri Alekan's *Des Lumières et des ombres*, Maurice Bessy's *Erich von Stroheim*, Claude Beylie's and Philippe Carcassonne's *Le Cinéma*, Patrick Brion's *Tex Avery*, François Chevassu's *Saison cinématographique 1948-49*, Raymond Chirat's and Jean-Claude Romer's *Catalogue des films de fiction de première partie, 1929-39*, Raymond Chirat's and Roger Icart's *Catalogue des films français de long metrage 1919-1929, L'Avant-Scène*'s reproduction of *Ciné-Magazine 1930*, Lotte Eisner's new edition of *Fritz Lang*, Roland Lacourbe's *La Guerre froide dans le cinéma d'espionnage*, Jacques Larcey's *Sacha Guitry, cent ans de théâtre et esprit*, Marcel Oms's *Pionniers du cinéma, cinéma et mémoire rurale*, Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet's *Les Premiers temps du cinéma*, Georges Sadoul's *Rencontres I: chroniques et entretiens*, Paul-Louis Thirard's and Alain Sanzio's *Luchino Visconti cinéaste*, Jean Tulard's *Dictionnaire du cinéma*, and Jean Vigo's *Oeuvre de cinéma.*

Although film-book publication is no longer the monopoly of a handful of publishers (indeed, some fifty publishers account for the books listed hereafter), nevertheless a mere eight publishing houses put out, year after year, collections of consistent quality: OCIC (which is the first publisher to specialize in books on Third World cinema), L'Age d'Homme, Edilig, Cahiers de la Cinémathèque, Hatier, Henri Veyrier, Editions d'Aujourd'hui (which reprints long out-of-print classics) and Pierre Lherminier, one of the pioneers of the French film-book publishing industry.

Lastly, what was a publisher's year is also a film-book buyer's: the strong dollar makes books that would be considered costly to the French appear moderately priced to the American buyer. A list of the publishers of French film-books, with their addresses, is appended. Before making payment, it is advised to first request the publisher's current price list.

Henri Agel, *Jean Gremillon.* Lherminier. An expanded reprint of a now long-out-of-print classic.

Henri Alekan, *Des Lumieres et des ombres.* Sycomore. Heavily (and elegantly) illustrated coffee-table tome by the director of photography of Jean Cocteau, among others.

Jan Andréa, *M.D.* Minuit. An eloquent attempt to come to grips with the work and personality of Marguerite Duras.

Michelangelo Antonioni, *Rien que des mensonges.* Lattes. Memoirs of the Italian director, written in the style of his cinema.

François Balogun, *Le Cinéma au Nigéria.* OCIC. Part of a scholarly series of monographs on the national cinemas of Africa and Latin America; contains an excellent filmography and bibliography. The OCIC collection is under the direction of Victor Bachy, one of the leading authorities on third world cinema.

Benoit Barbier and Marc Esposito, *Fort Saganne.* Premiere. On the making of Alain Corneau's last film. Well-illustrated with interesting interviews.

Jean-Louis Barrault, *Saisir le présent.* Laffont. Memoirs of Barrault and Madeleine Renaud and the film—and plays— they've done together.

Olivier Barrot, *René Clair ou le temps mesuré.* Hatier. A major work on a director long neglected by French critics (the only other important study of Clair is by the eminent critic René Régent) and never really forgiven for having directed films in America and the United Kingdom.

Léon Barsacq, *Le Décor de film 1895-1969.* Veyrier. A new edition, heavily illustrated and published in large format, but with minor errors as to years and titles left uncorrected.

Régis Bergeron, *Le Cinéma chinois,* volumes two (1949-59) and three (1959-83). L'Harmattan. A labor of love, this is the definitive work, in any language, on this period of a much-overlooked film industry.

André Bernard and Charles Floquet, *Album Sacha Guitry.* Veyrier. Superbly illustrated tome on the director of *La Poison* and *Le Roman d'un tricheur.*

Maurice Bessy, *Erich Von Stroheim.* Pygmalion. The author of similar works on Orson Welles and Chaplin, Bessy manages to come up, once again, with an original volume—illustrated with some rare documents—that does justice to an otherwise hard-to-grasp *auteur.*

Claude Beylie, *Max Ophuls.* L'Herminier. Probably the most authoritative work on the director of *Lola Montés,* reprinted at long last.

Claude Beylie and Philippe Carcassonne, *Le Cinéma.* Bordas. Coffee-table volume, well-illustrated as one would expect, but containing an assortment of provocative essays on film that aren't usually found in such works.

Claude Beylie and others, *1895-1910: Les Pionniers du cinéma français.* L'Avant-scène. A series of original essays on the early days of the French cinema.

Elisabeth Bonnafons, *François Truffaut.* L'Age D'Homme. The last thorough work written on Truffaut.

Madeleine Borgomana, *L'Ecriture filmique de Marguerite Duras.* Albatros. A thought-provoking approach.

Jacques Brel, *Oeuvres complètes.* Laffont. It is too often forgotten that Brel also made movies, sometimes even acted in them.

Patrick Brion, *Tex Avery.* Le Chene. One of the best books of the year in France, probably one of the best in the world on Avery, by Brion—a walking encyclopedia on cinema who programs films on France's Third Network.

Freddy Buache, *Le Cinéma allemand 1918-1933.* Hatier. Illustrated, with a filmography and bibliography.

Freddy Buache, *Le Cinéma suisse.* L'Age D'Homme. An authoritative study of Swiss cinema by the director of that country's national cinémathèque.

Luis Buñuel, *Viridiana.* L'Herminier. The screenplay for this classic, accompanied by a historical and critical dossier.

François Chalais, *Le Tir aux alouettes.* PLON. Mémoirs by one of France's prominent film critics.

François Chevassu, *Saison cinematographique 1948-49.* Revue du Cinéma. Very scholarly and accurate presentation of all the films that were released in France in 1948-49, plus illustrations and background on the films and directors in question. Follows the very successful *Saison cinématographique 1946-48,* issued last year.

Michel Chion, *Le Son au cinéma; la voix au cinéma.* Cahiers du Cinéma and Editions de L'Etoile, distributed by Seuil. Two books that offer an interesting approach to an unusual subject.

Raymond Chirat and Jean-Claude Romer, *Catalogue des films de fiction de première partie, 1929-1939.* Publications des Archives du Film. A listing, very scholarly, of the short films (those, for example of Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati) that were presented to French audiences in the thirties as a prelude to feature-length films.

Raymond Chirat and Roger Icart, *Catalogue des films français de long métrage. Films de fiction 1919-1929.* Cinematheque de Toulouse. Catalogue of *all* the feature-length films presented to French audiences during the twenties.

Ciné-Magazine 1930. L'Avant-Scène. *Ciné-Magazine* was one of the first serious French film magazines. *L'Avant-Scène* has selected the most interesting articles for 1930—the year France first saw the talkie—and has reproduced them as they originally appeared.

Les Cinémas indiens. Cerf. Done in collaboration with *Cinémaction,* prefaced by Satyajit Ray—all you ever wanted to know about the Indian cinema.

Philippe de Comes and Michel Marmin, *Le Cinéma français 1930-1960.* Atlas. A chronological look at the French film from sound to New Wave.

Francis Courtade, *Cinéma expressioniste.* Veyrier. Large format, well-illustrated and well-written look at prewar German cinema.

Sylvie Dallet, *Guerres révolutionnaires—histoire du cinéma.* L'Harmattan. A panoramic look at the subject of war as treated by the cinema, as well as an attempt to study the rapport between cinema and history.

Louis Delluc, *Charlot.* Editions D'Aujourd'hui. Reprint of Delluc's 1921 classic on Chaplin.

Dominique Desanti, *Sacha Guitry.* Biography of the film and theater director.

Carl T. Dreyer, *Oeuvres cinématographiques 1926-34.* Cinémathèque Française. Screenplays, treatments and other documents concerning Dreyer's most fruitful period.

Carl T. Dreyer, *Réflexions sur mon métier; Réflexions sur le cinéma.* Cahiers du Cinéma and Editions de L'Etoile, distributed by Seuil. Two works by Dreyer on himself. Fundamental to a proper understanding of his oeuvre.

Jean Durançon, *Robert Bresson.* Camera Stylo. Series of articles on one of the last authentic film auteurs. Illustrated in black and white.

Marguerite Duras, *L'Amant.* Minuit. Autobiographical novel, dedicated to the eminent cinematographer Bruno Nuytten.

Marguerite Duras, Jacques Lacan and others, *Marguerite Duras.* Albatros. A collection of seminal articles on Duras and her work.

Lotte Eisner, *Fritz Lang,* joint edition Cahiers du Cinéma/Cinémathèque Française. This new edition, the first in French, is significant insofar as Eisner was extremely disapointed in the English-language edition brought out a few years ago. One hopes that any new English version of her book will take into consideration the changes she incorporated into this edition which came out shortly after her death.

Dominique Fanne, *L'Univers de François Truffaut.* Cerf. Now it can be told: this was, for Truffaut himself, the best study of his films, the only one he recommended to others.

Fellini par Fellini. Calmann-Levy. Based on interviews with Giovanni Graziani.

François Garçon, *De Blum à Pétain.* Cerf. A most interesting approach to a most interesting period of film—and history.

Jean A. Gili, *L'Italie de Mussolini et son cinéma.* Veyrier.

Highly recommended account of fascist cinema in Italy, much on the early work of Rossellini.

Alexandre Grenier, *Belmondo.* Veyrier. Picture book, but as usual with Veyrier, an intelligent text.

Sacha Guitry, *Le Cinéma et moi.* Ramsay. With preface by François Truffaut, a remarkable collection of texts by Guitry selected by Claude Gauteur.

James Harding, *Etonnant Sacha Guitry.* Grancher. Another interesting work on Guitry; anecdotal, it is filled with photographs taken from private collections.

Marcel Huret, Ciné-Actualité, *Histoire de la presse filmée, 1895-1980.* Veyrier. Perhaps seemingly peripheral to French film, the subject of this study, the French newsreel, is actually central to an understanding of French film history, since, as the work points out—in both its texts and its illustrations—French cinema as we know it evolved more or less from the French documentary.

Youssef Ishaghpour, *Visconti, le sens de l'image.* Difference. How Visconti, through his work in cinema, theater, music and opera, tried to revive the humanist cultural tradition into which he was born.

Pierre Jenn, *Georges Méliès cinéaste.* Albatros. A somewhat semiotic analysis of the films of Méliès. Reads like a doctoral thesis, but the drawings are useful.

Peter Kral, *Le Burlesque ou morale de la tarte à la crème.*Stock. On Keaton, Chaplin, Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy.

Roland Lacourbe, *La Guerre froide dans le cinéma d'espionnage.* Veyrier. Much like his work on the Third Reich and the cinema, this one looks at the relationship between history and film, here through the prism of such events as Watergate, McCarthy and the CIA in Algeria and such films (150 in all) as *The Quiet American.* Highly recommended.

Henri Lassa, *De l'autre côté de l'écran.* Denoël. A "spectral analysis" of the special financial problems of the French cinema by the producer of *L'Argent des Autres* and *Coup de Tourchon.*

J. M. G. LeClezio, *Le Chercheur d'or.* Gallimard. By the author of the underlying story of Robert Bresson's next film.

Raymond Lefèvre, *Luis Buñuel.* Edilig. Monograph on the author of *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie,* Lefèvre's work is charming but much too discreet.

Marcel Lherbier, *L'Intelligence du cinématographe.* Aujourd'hui. Reprint of another long out-of-print classic.

Pierre Lherminier, *Jean Vigo.* Lherminier. Expanded version of a book that had originally been published in Lherminier's "cinéma d'aujourd'hui" collection; contains texts by and about Vigo.

Jacques Lorcey, *Sacha Guitry, cent ans de théâtre et esprit.* PAC. Probably the thickest book on film to come out of France in a long time, this one is a film-by-film (and play-by-play) look at Guitry's work.

René Marchand and Pierre Weinstein, *Le Cinéma dans la Russie nouvelle.* Aujourd'hui. Reprint of an exceptionally interesting, but little-known work on Soviet cinema.

Marlène Dietrich. Portraits 1926-1960. Denoël. Coffee-table book; has a text, but doesn't really need one.

Marcel Martin, *Le Cinéma français depuis la guerre.* Edilig. On postwar French cinema.

Michel Mesnil, *Le Parfum de la salle en noir.* Presses Universitaires de France. A very intelligent work, on the "specificity" of cinema, as opposed to the "film-on-TV."

Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire.* Bourgois. A seminal work now back in print in a new edition.

Pierre Miquel, *Histoire de la radio et de la télévision.* Perrin. Important work, by the renowned historian, demonstrates how the evolution of French cinema depended on the evolution of French TV.

Le Monde, La Révolution des Médias. Le Monde. Important work insofar as it deals with the impact on the cinema of a new generation of French media.

Pierre Monnier, *Arletty.* Stock. Picture-book on the actress whose most celebrated role remains Garance in *Les Enfants du Paradis.*

Edgar Morin, *Les Stars.* Galilee. New edition, illustrated, of the 1957 classic.

Jean Mottet, *D. W. Griffith: quel cinéma?* L'Harmattan. A very important collection of papers on Griffith and the American cinema of 1895-1915, most of them delivered before the recent international symposium on Griffith held in Paris.

Marcel Oms, *Le Cinéma des Surréalistes.* Cahiers de la Cinémathèque. A monograph on French surrealist cinema. As usual, some very intelligent contributions to a most interesting subject.

Marcel Oms, *Feyder, Zavattini, Trésors de la Cinémathèque.* Cahiers de la Cinémathèque.

Marcel Oms, *Pionniers du Cinéma et memoire rurale.* Cahiers de la Cinémathèque. An important collection of papers on the early days of the French film.

Marcel Oms, *La Révolution du parlant.* Cahiers de la Cinémathèque. Another interesting work on the coming to France of the sound film.

Marcel Oms and Pierre Roura, *Le Cinéma de l'Espagne franquiste.* Cahiers de la Cinémathèque. Spanish cinema during 36 years of Franco's dictatorship.

Pascal Ory, *L'Anarchisme de droite.* Grasset. Also *L'Entre deux Mai: histoire culturelle de la France.* Seuil. Two works on the contemporary social and political climate of France, but done much in the context of film. A very interesting, and evidently rewarding, approach.

Rik Otten, *Le Cinéma au Zaire, au Rwanda, et au Burundi.* OCIC. Three more national cinemas, treated together in one book, from OCIC's highly laudable series on Third World cinema.

F. Pelletier, *Imaginaires du cinématographe.* Librairie des Meridiens. Through a study of more than 250 films, an attempt to trace the sociocultural interaction of film and society.

Bertrand Philbert, *L'Homosexualité à L'Ecran.* Veyrier. A heavily illustrated attempt to assess the relationship between homosexuality and film, especially through the French cinema.

Claude-Jean Philippe, *Le Roman du cinéma.* Fayard. Volume one of this interestingly written tome on world cinema dealt with the years 1928-38, while volume two, shortly to come out, deals with the 1939-45 period.

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Vincent Pinel, *Techniques du cinéma.* Presses Universitaires de France. In 128 pages, just about everything you need to know about the technical aspects of cinema. Second edition.

Portraits. Bordas. As usual with volumes published by Bordas, a very elegant book, contains probably the best collection ever assembled of film portraits.

Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet, *Les Premiers temps du cinéma.* Champs Vallon. One of the best books of the year. About the worldwide operations of the Lumière brothers, the story of the 100 operators sent out from Lyons to travel the world, to exhibit films produced by the Lumières, but also record footage that was brought

back for exhibition in France. Contains unpublished photographs and correspondence. Very elegantly presented.

Le Roman de François Truffaut. Cahiers du Cinéma. A monograph published a few weeks after the death of Truffaut. Although very interestingly illustrated with a number of rare photographs and containing texts written by just about every crony of Truffaut, this book has a tendency to present such a positive portrait of the man that in the end the portrait does not ring true.

Roberto Rossellini, *Le Cinéma révélé.* Cahiers du Cinema Editions de L'Etoile, distributed by Seuil. A collection of texts concerning Rossellini that originally appeared, in the fifties, in *Cahiers.*

Georges Sadoul, *Rencontres I—chroniques et entretiens.* Denoël. Bernard Eisenschitz. a regular collaborator of the late Sadoul, has assembled here a number of articles by Sadoul, notably some very interesting interviews done in the fifties.

Enzo Siciliano, *Pasolini, une vie.* Difference. Biography of the director of *Téorema*; reads very much like a novel.

Noël Simsolo, *Howard Hawks.* Edilig. Monograph on the American directgor, with filmography and bibliography.

Jean Charles Tacchella, *Tournages: les cinéastes derrière la caméra.* Eden. Coffee-table book on the behind-the-scenes activity associated with a number of major films, by the director of *Cousin, Cousine.*

Max Tessier, *Le Cinéma japonais.* Lherminier. This is a new edition of one of the best studies of the Japanese film (see *FQ*, Fall 1982), this time more detailed and better illustrated.

Paul-Louis Thirard and Alain Sanzios, *Luchino Visconti, cinéaste.* Persona. This excellent text won the 1984 Jean Vigo prize for film books, and marks an important reassessment by French critics of Visconti and his work.

Olivier Todd, *Jacques Brel, une vie.* Laffont. Life of the chansonnier, but also cinéaste.

François Truffaut, *La Chambre verte; Le Dernier Métro.* L'Avant-Scène. The screenplays (with stills) of two of Truffaut's most important recent works. The *Last Metro* script is especially interesting for it contains a frame-by-frame description of Truffaut's very first film *Une Visite*, which starred Jean-José Richer and Laura Mauri.

François Truffaut, *Les Films de ma vie.* Flammarion. New edition of the 1976 collection of articles by Truffaut. Unfortunately, none of the errors in the earlier work are corrected.

Jean Tulard, *Dictionnaire du Cinéma.* Laffont. In two volumes, probably the most complete record of names (actors, producers, directors, technicians, etc.) and titles in any dictionary of the cinema. Tulard is the noted historian of Napoleonic France, which probably explians his accuracy and thoroughness.

L'Univers esthétique de Pasolini. Persona. Album published to mark the November 1984 exposition on Pasolini at the Sorbonne; explores the relationship between Pasolini and painting, especially the work of Piero della Francesca.

Jean Vigo, *Oeuvre de cinéma.* Lherminier. All of the screenplays, treatments, projected films and other writings of the author of *Zéro de Conduite.*

Luchino Visconti and Suso Cecchi d'Amico, *A la recher-*

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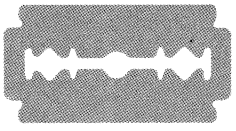

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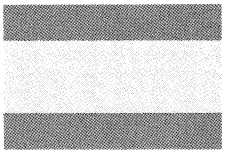

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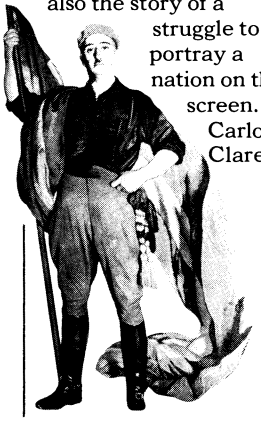

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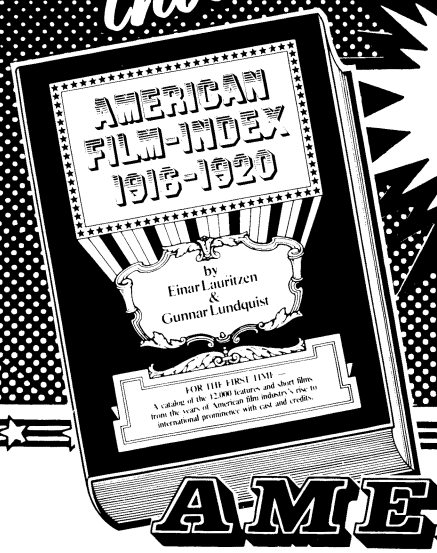

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